



WIRED

THE WIRE ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC

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JIM O'ROURKE

The man who fell to earth

Lol Coxhill Kaija Saariaho
The Soviet noise network

Bobby Conn Nagisa Ni te Blectum From Blechdom Charley Patton Dave Douglas
Manhattan stories: Lee Ranaldo, Stephen Vitiello, Skiz Fernando, Alan Licht and more



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For further information check out the following sites:
<http://www.elfa.org/sanfrancisco/21022.htm>
<http://www.yescentral.com/enigmas.org/>

Ultra-Rad play London's KX (November 10) and Fetusacine in Manchester (November 18). The shows will feature current material based on the organizing of immigrant workers in LA, and previous releases coming last April's anti-Ford Trade protests in Quebec City, and at the Tysons Center.



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set fire to flames 'sings reign rebuilder'

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set fire to flames are a collective of thirteen musicians engaged in the independent, hyper-creative musical community of Montreal (including members of Exhaust, FY, Pen Am, godspeed you black emperor!, Hanged Up, HRETA, squintlefish press, undr...) brooding and beautiful, haunted and haunting, 'sings reign rebuilder' is so stunningly / heavily played and skillfully assembled infused throughout with a massive sense of slow-burning tension and periods of weighty, soaring release - sweetening everything along with it.

set fire to flames effortlessly slip and slide from extended passages of scorching-out, heatless motion / concrete contraptions to loosely atmospheric location recordings and stinging, angular string arrangements, to deep / sparse drones, and dense, heavily rhythmic workouts.

The group spontaneously implodes / explodes. Sparks fly. Aliens are formed.



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Editor's Idea

This issue has been produced in nearly half the amount of time we usually spend on it, so as the final pages are mopped up and we begin to clear the decks in preparation for work on the next one – magazine work is a treadmill like most other jobs, only we get to choose the music – there is a more enervated feel in the office than usual. Why the constricted schedule? We were interrupted by our second office relocation this year – the last one we envisage for the foreseeable future. Part of the current demographic shift of gravity within London towards its ancient East End, we have flocked up in the Whitechapel district, at a uniquely tense node of urban friction between an encroaching, gentrifying financial district, a rich seam of youth culture in the shape of clubs, music studios and creative companies, and pool of multi-ethnic communities from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Turkey and Vietnam. If there's one thing that holds the promise of picking up my flagging spirits at this point, it's the prospect of working within the stimulating patch of Jack The Ripper territory. Thanks to our new cohabitants, Mute magazine (www.mutemagazine.com), for making the new space available. Thanks, too, to Adrian

Shaughnessy and Katy Richardson at Intro for appearing just at the right moment with their offer of summer workspace in Bloomsbury. And to all our correspondents – readers, advertisers, record labels, PR companies, etc etc – our new address appears below; you can write this one in ink, we promise.

So, a particularly grueling month's excuse for crying off with a short idle. This issue harbours all manner of references to 11 September and its aftermath, some deliberately solicited (see our View From Downtown feature on page 28), but in other reviews and articles the topic just couldn't seem to go away. Nothing like this, I believe, occurred back in 1991, the year of Desert Storm; neither did it occur during the brief return to bombing in Iraq by American planes in early 1998. The most prominent story has been the notorious case of Stockhausen, who achieved an unusually high profile not just in avant music circles, but indeed across a wider range of media, for his unguarded press conference in which he dubbed the terror attacks on America "Lucifer's greatest work of art". Foolish and unnecessary words, of course, but not, I believe, uttered out of malice. But

from what I know of Stockhausen, I would be prepared to give him the benefit of the doubt and let him carry on pottering away finishing *Light*, the offshoot, aggrandised comment of a mad old fish that backfired spectacularly. It was his timing that was so poor – after all, Don DeLillo's early 90s novel *Mao II* makes pretty much the same point about terrorism as the world's most potent form of narrative drive. Being a respected novelist instead of a composer whose music will empty the average classical record store (a statement of fact rather than a value judgement), DeLillo's comments were taken to demonstrate that he had mastered our zeitgeist. Popular opinion will always conspire to prevent art musicians from being held in such high esteem.

No, what is extraordinary is the sense of betrayal and danger many commentators seemed to experience in Stockhausen's words, and the account he was held to, when surely the far greater linguistic crime of the past two months was George W Bush's description of his war campaign in Islamic territories as a "crusade".

ROB YOUNG



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Letters

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Letters must include a full name and address



Lester leaps in

Noise annoys

After finally sitting down to my favourite feast – the new issue of *The Wire* – I'm moved to write regarding the Tangents feature on Lester Bangs by Mark Sinker (*The Wire* 211). Tangents is without fail one of the most intellectually engaging and productive spots in the magazine, distinguished by the ability to coalesce widely disparate musics and socio-cultural phenomena in a manner coherent enough to reveal new tracks through secret histories which would otherwise have lain dormant. They are, indeed, a focal reference point for my undergraduate courses in multimedia and mediation at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa. Ken Hollings's Tangents in *The Wire* 209 on the various pop interpolations of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* is an exemplary case in point, and perhaps not coincidentally features in the same issue as the update, in *Either/Or*, of Attali's arguments from his well known text *Noise*.

Sinker's attempt to have Attali's work and Bangs's penchant for rock noise play oppositionally off each

other suffers in the first place from an almost completely incoherent writing style. I'm not suggesting your writers should avoid postmodern 'heteroglossia' by any means – its appearance in your pages is one of the distinguishing aspects of *The Wire* – but Sinker seems unnecessarily tortured here, even if it is an attempt to enact his subject. Indeed, the 'folding' and 'doubling' trope is so bandied about as to risk the piece disappearing up its own Deleuze. More seriously, the reading of *Noise* is disappointingly expedient, in order to make the point about the ambiguous romantic nihilism of rock's, and Bangs's, noise aesthetic. Attali's schema works from the assumption that music is one of the most important ways in which society organises violence in order to exist. Without violence there cannot be change, but without its management there cannot be society. This is why the book is a 'political economy', in the sense of an optimal organisation of social forces. Each point of the schema, wilyly caricatured by Sinker (eg 'gluey generalisations') concentrates on one organising principle which characterises the era without being

exclusive. The book therefore has much more in common with Foucault's theories of knowledge, the ethnography of Lévi-Strauss and the cultural critique of the Frankfurt School than the Situationists and Baudrillard. Indeed, the phase of 'repetition' characterising the Industrial era's production of shorter, more machine song forms (for example, punk) shapes a very productive context for Bangs's aesthetic, as Hollings shows in the case of *Metropolis* and Detroit Techno. I have to agree about his take on the so-called 'compositional' stage, however.

Even in disagreement, though, many thanks for a consistently out there read.

James Sey via email

Oh, no! It's Shapiro

Peter Shapiro's review of my latest album, *Oh, No! It's Rubato* (Soundcheck, *The Wire* 212), presented a wonderfully concise profile of Devo, and a glorious explanation as to why their music is important enough to serve as the basis for a contemporary cover album.

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Letters

However, I was wondering when you plan to run the actual review of my album. I did notice that the last small paragraph contained references to "conceptual stuff... banded out on a Steinway [in the vein of] Windham Hill", but I wasn't sure how that related to my album's music or text.

Terre Theomiltz via email

Intensity on tap

For (my) sanity's sake please ignore Mike Kittell's closing remark (Letters, *The Wire* 212) about "getting over the fushitsusha thing". Like, wow, what's he on? There are precious too few pieces already on the magnificent Keiji Haino. Luckily, thank God, you review his CDs and all of his offshoot projects and do the occasional feature. Hardly overkill. Where else would we get even that? Q?

By all means do a piece on the incurably lame Fugs if you must, but don't forsake the man in black. Your own Biba Kopf once said, "The great and terrible thing about this Haino music is, once heard, it's well nigh impossible to settle for anything less intense". Spot on. So cut it out of the only supply.

Del Lewis London, UK

Temple convert

In answer to Thomas Mills's letter in *The Wire* 212, I have also seen Acid Mothers Temple and was suitably converted to their cause. I am a big fan of guitar rock, the louder the better. The electric guitar was invented for a reason: to make interesting music. It's certainly a fuck of a lot more interesting than the bloody clarinet or whatever it is that Peter Brötzmann plays (low end saxes and oboe actually – Ed). And nobody makes it more interesting than Makoto Kawabata.

Iain Somerville Edinburgh, UK

Academic differences

The eclectic and genre-defying forms of music covered in *The Wire* pose problems to the writer or reviewer. Unlike the situation in more established fields like classical music or rock, there are few agreed conventions or even languages (in the sense of notation or recognisable structural elements) with which to communicate their form and content to readers. Artists often lack such a vocabulary, especially in the areas of electronica and improvisation. In these areas of performance and recording, the creative act often occurs in a more intuitive or empirical way, or without need of a prepared structure or plan, such as a score. Artists such as Burnt Friedman (*The Wire* 199) can provide enlightening discussion of how theories influence their creative practice and produce innovative,

well crafted recordings. Others, I suspect, prefer to conceptualise about the place of their work in modern society. They thereby give themselves a more erudite way of presenting a profile to their audience in the media, disguising the dearth of craft and content behind a trendy smokescreen à la Damien Hirst, Tracy Emin, et al.

There's a tendency for interviewers/reviewers to collude in this by looking more at the philosophy and cultural context of the work at the expense of the actual form and content, be this tribal, rhythmic, harmonic, whatever. I buy *The Wire* to hear about the music and get an evocation or description of what it sounds like. Too often I am left none the wiser as an interview wenders off into a discussion of cultural theories. In *The Wire* 211, Mark Sinker dismisses Attali's Noise in a style of writing which privileges crucially witty entertainment over serious investigation of a groundbreaking and unique text. In *Print Run*, *The Wire* 198, Ben Watson indulged in a tirade against cultural studies writing in his review/demolition of *Making Popular Music* by Jason Tynbne. This is actually a very thought provoking book which draws together some of the best theory and research on how musicians try to achieve commercial success without surrendering artistic autonomy. Neither of these contributions would have stood up in the academic world, as they do not justify their arguments.

In effect, *The Wire* is becoming as much about cultural studies as about music. If contributors wish to write on a cultural studies/conceptual art angle they should do so with the same rigour as would be expected in academia. My guess is that most *Wire* readers are more interested in the music. I also believe that *The Wire* can play a valuable role in the development of writing styles which articulate sonic art to a wider audience.

Tom Culls Middlesex University, UK

Three into two does go

David Keenan refers to Fred Lonergan's "trio" CD with John Corbett and Torsten Müller (Soundcheck, *The Wire* 211). Actually, *Twofer* (Penumbra) is Corbett's CD alone, on which he plays duos with Müller and Lonergan. As Keenan would have found out if he had listened, it's also fine music, especially the duos with Müller, one of the greatest, most underrecorded double bass players in improvised music. It's not a "scrambled mess" to my ears. Keenan could learn a bit from Corbett about taking his job more seriously.

Damon Smith via email

The misleading "trio" description was erroneously edited into David's copy. As to your view of his opinion, well, one man's meat... – Ed

Taktful thanks

I would like to express my gratitude. Upon your recommendation and sponsorship, my brother and I took to a seven hour drive from Paris to Bern to hit the Taktlos Festival. This was a land of wonders. David Moss, Phil Minton, Jamie Lidell, Thomas Brinkmann and Jake Mandell offered to us something that one cannot expect: a truly modern and exciting music.

Laurent Jolivet Paris, France

Puerile criticism

Yes, it's good to extend your readership, but Radiohead, Björk, Pulp, etc are overexposed in other areas and are essentially popular artists. If your brief is to extend into this area, where are Granddaddy, Sparklehorse or The Beta Band? Also, is HipHop a progressive musical form? Your mag seems to think so, yet often it appears juvenile lyrically and puerile musically. More genuinely experimental art music interfaces please, such as the Christina Kubisch piece (*The Wire* 212), which was excellent.

Dave Veres Southport, UK

"Juvenile lyrically and puerile musically"? The same could be said about rock, but that would be a ridiculous generalisation. As in all genres, HipHop contains its share of radical, innovative and creative musicians, and those are the ones we focus on – Ed

Rave on

Continuing thanks and kudos for your excellent magazine. *The Wire* continues to be the only music magazine I can stomach from cover to cover every month, even if you did put Radiohead on the cover. The Rune Grammofon CD was amazing, possibly the best CD I have received yet with the magazine. I cannot rave enough about the work you folks do. I find I am either discovering some new artist in your pages whom I have not yet encountered, or being reminded of some forgotten treasure that has been unfairly languishing in the depths of my record collection. Nobody does it better.

Neil Essell Toronto, Canada

Corrections

Issue 212 In Out There, the Incoming section printed the wrong Web address for the Atlantic Waves festival of new Portuguese music. The correct URL is: www.atlanticwaves.org.uk

Issue 210 In the Directory, the address of Mode Records was printed incorrectly. The correct details are: PO Box 1262, New York, NY 10009, USA
E mode@mode.com W www.mode.com

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Marina Rosenfeld

Gender war at 33 and a third. By Christoph Cox

Lapptite for destruction: Marina Rosenfeld (2nd left) with Chiara Gioveduro, Barbara Eas and Ilona Most at a Sheer Frost Orchestra performance

Marina Rosenfeld's hands rise and fall with the smooth elegance of a concert pianist performing a lilting Chopin Ballade. Drifting lightly from the turntable's tonearm to the mixer's knobs and the laptop's trackpad, they trigger and shape flows of sonic matter that contribute to her unique palette—vinyl crackles, looping bell tones, snippets of guitar—to the abstract din generated by the women and machines that surround her. Like some odd board meeting of electronic engineers, Rosenfeld and her collaborators—Ilona Most, Kaffe Matthews, and Keiko Uenishi—are gathered around a table covered with snaking wires and an exhaustive inventory of analogue and digital equipment. For the duration of their 45 minute set, the four women send out ear-boggling volleys of auditory chatter: glassy chimes, cycling whirs, and deep-bass thuds and moans.

"Whenever I put a group together that's all women, something is just really... there," Rosenfeld remarks with a laugh. "There's a kind of energy and possibilities just built into that situation. I don't know why. But I know that we experience it over and over." Indeed, of late, fostering all-woman musical collectives has been a central project for this 33 year old artist. Rosenfeld also runs the astonishing 17 piece Sheer Frost Orchestra, which made its New York debut earlier this year. Lining the stage at the NYC Whitney Museum's motown apocoe, a dozen women crouched over electric guitars lying prostrate before them. Following a loosely structured score, they tapped, scraped, gouged, and caressed the strings with nail polish bottles, while five others, armed with laptops, spun digital variations on their colleagues' themes.

Asked about her feminist inspired musical experimentalism, Rosenfeld cites several formative experiences. She recalls delightful hours spent backstage at rehearsals by the Brooklyn Philharmonic Orchestra watching her cellist father perform everything from Mahler symphonies to Robert Wilson

operas. She remembers years of training in classical piano theory and composition. And finally, she recalls a decisive event. "I went to Harvard on a music scholarship and was one of only two women in the whole music programme. It was the most obnoxious, priggish, arrogant, and chauvinistic environment that I'd encountered before or since. To top it all off, I was plagiarised by my thesis advisor. When I complained about it to the head of the department, he looked at me and said, 'Marina, have you ever heard of a film called *Rashomon*? Sometimes, a woman cries rape and the man claims that it was consensual.' It's just such a symbolic story in so many ways. So then I just thought, 'Fuck the East Coast! It's horrible. What's wrong with these people? I'm going to California.'"

Rosenfeld spent the better part of the 90s in Valencia and Los Angeles, attending California Institute of the Arts and developing a distinctive body of audio-visual art. Searching for a way to join composition with improvisation, she began experimenting with turntables. "I like the turntable because it seems to be halfway between visual and audio. I like the fact that you can see it, and it's really stupid looking and simple. There's nothing simpler than a loop, and that's kind of the principle of the record player."

Like most turntablists, Rosenfeld began as a thrift-store junky (she confesses a particular fondness for Rod Stewart records). But she soon stumbled upon a different working idea. Instead of finding her sources, she began constructing them from scratch, recording fragments of processed sound onto a series of acetates (one-off records or dublates). "I like the idea that you can make a record that has these partially formulated ideas on it and then finish the composition live, which is what mixing is. It was a way of backtracking from the training that I had, which was to create a finished piece and then try to perform it perfectly. Instead of that, I like the idea that a composition is structured like a situation, where you

have certain circumstances, and people, and materials that you bring with you into a space where something unpredictable can happen."

Over the past four years, Rosenfeld has brought her live multi-turntable situations to venues all over the US and Europe. His first record, *the forest is the garden* (thesea (Charisma 1999) documents two such performances, a solo and a group improvisation on material from her three sets of acetates. Clanging bells, sirens, crackles, and echoes swirl around in layered loops periodically punctuated by the sharp pop of a lock groove. Though the notion of an 'imaginary journey' is one of DJ culture's most thesaurus-borne clichés, these two performances make good on the analogy, transporting the listener on a locomotive passage through sonic scenery at once organic and machine.

"I've been experimenting with the laptop; but I won't relinquish my contact with some non-laptop medium like a turntable or a guitar," Rosenfeld tells me. She's now back in Brooklyn, living blocks away from her childhood haunts and experiencing a particularly fruitful time. Working with an extraordinary group of collaborators, her various projects are converging in intriguing ways. "The two strains in my work—the turntable stuff and the guitar orchestra—grew out of the same place and, for the first time, are coming back together," she muses. Indeed, her newest series of acetates, for use with the laptop group, feature bits of Sheer Frost guitar. "All of my projects have to do with improvisation and the idea that one of the elements of improvisation is recruiting interesting people," she reflects. "When I meet a really intriguing woman, whether she's a musician or not, I often get to say, 'I'm mounting this orchestra. Have you ever wanted to be a rock star?'" [] Sheer Frost Orchestra's Drop, Drone, Scratch, Slide, And A For Anything is out this month on Charisma. Her laptop ensemble will be performing at London's Field 62 club, as well as several dates in mainland Europe, in December.



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Bobby Conn

America's dreaming. By Ken Hollings



Mr Mojo rising: Bobby Conn with wife/vocalist Monica Bouffon

"When you're brought up to expect it," runs the opening line to "No Revolution", Bobby Conn's spiky anthem to personal co-option from his latest album *The Golden Age*, "you accept it like it's a fact." Born Robert Robert Conn, in honour of his two grandfathers who just happened to share the same Christian name, in June 1967, Conn spent much of his youth being moved around the American continent before finally settling down in the mid-70s to fritter away his adolescence in the suburbs of Chicago, a city he still calls home. Many of the songs on *The Golden Age* describe episodes from his teenage years, fumbling with bodies, drugs and dreams as America continued its blissful slide into hedonistic binging. To be young, curious and alive in an age that saw Logan's Run filmed in a Texas shopping mall and a club like Plato's Retreat – where swinging couples could meet for group sex – opening its doors in New York, must have been to awaken inside a fabulous dream.

If the dream is recalled with any sense of nostalgia on *The Golden Age*, it's because of Conn's fondness for the true carrier signal of pleasure: the music of his childhood. This includes everything from 'classic rock', a term that obviously can't have enough quotation marks around it, to advertising jingles, Top 40 soul and disco, especially Curtis Mayfield and Van McCoy. TV themes from such classic urban fantasies as *SWAT* and *The Rockford Files*, "plus all that timeless Mike Post product, the lame 'soft rock' my parents listened to, like Simon & Garfunkel, Cat Stevens, the Broadway show tunes they sang during car trips, lots of Rogers & Hammerstein, and the constant background of 'Three B's' [ie Bach, Beethoven and Brahms] symphonic music." For Conn, unashamedly attracted by 'shiny things', it all has its place.

"There's a radio station in LA that has as its slogan 'you know every song'," he explains, "and I just wanted to capture that same oppressive degree of

familiarity: to force the listener into my bedroom as I masturbate to 'Afternoon Delight'."

Only a heart of stone could fail to love a man who recalls The Starland Vocal Band, last seen hosting summer replacement shows on TV alongside Glen Campbell and The Fifth Dimension, with such a high degree of affection, but some non-believers might still ask, what's the deal?

"Ironically, especially considering how little critical respect it got at the time," Conn responds, "I appreciate 70s pop for its craftsmanship. The great liberation of 'punk rock' was that it took pop music out of the hands of skilled musicians and gave it back to the people. Unfortunately, these days it's in the hands of a bunch of marketing majors, and they are very good at the job of delivering predictable products with measurable results. By contrast, the charts of the 70s were incredibly diverse stylistically and had a place for individuality and musicianship. So I'm swimming against the tide; rebelling against the status quo by recreating the status quo of 25 years ago..."

Talking of 25 years ago, the way Conn delivers the line "Turn out the lights, don't turn out the lights" from "Angels" – a sharply observed study in drugged-up sexual angst – comes an echo of David Bowie's *Thin White Duke* persona.

"Yes, well," he admits, "the key was the line before that. 'He told me...' , because no matter how I tried I always sang it just like Bowie in 'Starman', so I just went with what came naturally. *Hunky Dory* is my favourite Bowie album, because it's all over the map and has the highest 'Tin Pan Alley' quotient of any Bowie record. Plus he covers Briff Rouse's "Fill Your Heart", which is an incredibly brave move, an act of fearless sentimentality that I admire deeply. I try to get some emotional honesty into my words; otherwise the tunes are hard to sing with any conviction. For imagery, I've always enjoyed Leonard Cohen and Jimmy Webb; for

directness you can't beat Will Shatter, from the San Francisco band Flipper, or [AC/DC's] Bon Scott."

No slight lyricist himself, Conn maintains a faith in songwriting that threatens to upset the status quo still further. "It's very easy to assemble a bunch of styles and sonic signifiers, set them to a computerised rhythm, float processed warbling over it and call it a song," he observes, "but it's getting increasingly difficult to tell one clever collage from another, unless there is some strong lyrical and melodic logic to give it some lasting meaning." *The Golden Age* has the feel of something meticulously worked on, a real labour of love. Conn compares the year long recording process, which involved assembling what his wife (and vocalist in his backing group) Monica Bouffon described as a "ghost album" of alternate takes, to the labours of his eccentric neighbour busily constructing "a replica of the Eiffel Tower out of matchsticks and glitter" in his garage. Helping apply the glue and sparkles has been Jim O'Rourke, whom Conn first met in a stinky basement studio in Chicago. "The stinkiness was due to an infestation of cats, one of which had a litter of kittens. The thing that struck me about Jim was that he'd never held a kitten before in his life. He held the little thing at almost arm's length, concerned that he might break it. I liked him immediately." It's a beguiling image to set against the predatory pleasure-seeking monsters inhabiting such songs as "Winners" or its counterpart, "Whores", in which the relentless pursuit of adolescent pleasures becomes a damaging drive towards pointless consumption. Even today, Conn is not entirely immune, just ask him about his passion for helicopters. "It's the ultimate vehicle for the CEO mentality," he says. "It's how winners get around on the 'level playing field' when they aren't in their golf carts." □ *The Golden Age* is out now on Thrill Jockey



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The music of Nagisa Ni te, currently based round the duo of multi-instrumentalist Shiryū Shibayama and his partner/muse Masako Takeda, sounds quite unlike anything else happening elsewhere in Japan, never mind anywhere else in the world. Although Shibayama's roots run deep into Japan's post-punk scene, with connections to groups like Maher Shalal Hash Baz and Chô-Shizu, his musical aesthetic remains endearingly hard to pin down. His compositions are charged with the same elegant sience that made The Velvet Underground's third album such an intensely personal affair, yet Shibayama's guitar solos are as obliterating as Neil Young's; resolutely melodic yet staggeringly emotive (indeed their group name, in Japanese, means *On The Beach*). Add to this a primitive folk aesthetic, a love for classic pop forms and an early obsession with Eric Dolphy and Derek Bailey, and you'll get some idea of the tongue-tied elegance of their sound; wistful pop with some raggedly avant theory.

"I was once trapped by the theory of improvisation," Shibayama deadpans. "But as I didn't like the stiff atmosphere which is often present in so called 'free jazz' I applied it to the folk song. In short, we recorded without practising." Although Shibayama's recording career began back in 1981 with the release of a solo EP under the name Team Spirit, alongside dates with the psychedelic groups Idiot O'Clock and Naoki Zushi Unit, his first real breakthrough was with the pop-psych group Hallelujahs, who released their debut LP on Shibayama's own Org label in 1986. *Niku O Kurate Chikwa O Takeyo*, since reissued on CD by PSF, is a timeless pop record, one that combines unabashedly straightforward songwriting with stumbling technique and wild ambition. Out in Osaka it was difficult to find indifferent travellers, but Shibayama was slowly putting down a crack cocaine of outsider musicians. "Hallelujahs was basically a flexible band without

permanent members," Shibayama explains. "We did a few concerts with totally different members from the recording but it didn't last long. Naoki Zushi was very important to the group, he was the first guitarist in Idiot O'Clock. I heard him play for the first time in 1980, his guitar playing and his ability to compose music was incredibly original. He really stimulated me and we've been working together since." Shibayama would go on to release Zushi's solo LP, *Paradise*, via the Org label as well as sides by Idiot O'Clock and Maher Shalal Hash Baz's legendary *Return Visit To Rock Mass* box set.

"I originally founded Org to release the Hallelujahs LP," Shibayama remembers. "It was in 1986 and Japan was really booming, and the music in the charts really reflected this. It was also round about then that the Japanese independents, who started out modelling themselves on labels like Rough Trade, began to lose their raison d'être." Indeed, Rough Trade were particularly important in helping Shibayama formulate his own aesthetic. "Although I haven't heard all the Rough Trade records, many of those records were important to me, especially *The Raincoats* and *Young Marble Giants*," he says. "Essential Logic were also inspiring and, after all, wasn't it Rough Trade who made Robert Wyatt restart his career by suggesting a new point of view? Rough Trade simply allowed the musicians to make the music they would like to make, and that's the most important thing."

After Hallelujahs split in 1988, Shibayama bowed out of music for a few years. "I began suffering from neurosis," he says. "I was busy balancing the condition of my heart. Then Tori Kudo's passion for music reigned me." Shibayama had been bankrolling Maher Shalal Hash Baz's epic *Rock Mass* set and, caught up in Kudo's obsession, he began making plans to record again. After meeting his current partner, Masako Takeda, Nagisa's path was clear. "I

regard Nagisa Ni te as a place where I can reflect on universal themes through the daily life of myself and Masako," Shibayama asserts. "When I describe Masako as my muse, I don't mean it in the sense of just flattering a girl - she really does play that role for me." Every Nagisa Ni te record features Masako on the cover, and every release has the aura of being born out of a great romance. Although Takeda's musical role is limited to "wind" on Nagisa's 1995 debut, *On The Love Beach*, she now enjoys a much more central role, her quiet, unaffected vocals really changing Shibayama's expensive arrangements, especially on *Feel*, their latest disc on P-Vine.

The beach is an obsession for Shibayama: an image that recurs again and again in both his lyrics and artwork. It may be a "love beach", but it feels long since abandoned. Like a nostalgic childhood memory of summer, Shibayama agrees: "Ever since I was a child I've been attracted to the melancholic mood of the sound of the waves and the nature of the country." That same autumnal feeling is all over the new Geographic retrospective, *Songs For A Simple Moment*, which traces Shibayama's career from Hallelujahs up until Nagisa's current line-up via album tracks, alternative takes and live jams. Tori Kudo has described Nagisa's music as "emotionally naked", and on this evidence it's often upsettingly so. Coupled with lush, poetic lyrics that cover everything from mystic cosmologies to songs about dogs, Shibayama's soaring guitar work sounds like he's scraping the heavens as he extends weeping notes into teary, 15 minute works of absolusion. But Kudo inevitably puts it best: "Nagisa Ni te's naked, Progressive rock-based worldly songs, which are sung not so much deliberately as seriously, on their love beach, now fill a blank somewhere between underground hi-fi and overground to fi." A blank that, up until now, no one even knew existed. □ *Songs For A Simple Moment* is out this month on Geographic.

Nagisa Ni te

Life's a beach. By David Keenan





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After the extraordinary success of "Nature Morte" (CD LR 310), Simon Nabatov comes up with a double CD based on a novel by a great Russian writer Mikhail Bulgakov "Master and Margarita." Nabatov's quintet is made up of stellar members of the New York Downtown scene: Mark Feldman (violin), Herb Robertson (trumpet), Mark Helias (bass), Tom Ranney (drums). The book provided Nabatov with a series of formal analogues, structuring patterns, some constructions and moods, well-spring of feelings and emotions ranging from swing rhythms to cool jazz textures bridged by improvisation. Libretto by Simon Nabatov, liner notes by Stuart Broomer.

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Satoko Fujii

Mapping the great divide. By Andy Hamilton



"I can see Japan from outside, and see New York from Japan... It is nice to get energy from different places," remarks pianist and composer Satoko Fujii, who divides her activities between her homeland and the United States. Her latest releases show an affiliation both to a Japanese aesthetic and to the ethos of New York's downtown improvisers. But while her career has always been about bridging different cultures, her music explores the rift between composition and improvisation. "I use the word 'jazz' for music that has improvisation and also can include any culture and can develop all the time," Fujii declares via an email exchange. "Jazz" is not the thing we can see in a museum. If jazz means a swing beat, or certain chord progressions, I probably am not a jazz player."

Two current releases encompass the parameters of Fujii's music: *Vulcan*, on her own Libra label, features a Japanese quartet including her trumpeter husband Natsuki Tamura and drummer Tatsuya Yoshida, from post-Prog duo Ruins (among countless other projects). It's her most arresting small group release to date. *Junction*, just out on Ewe, is the fourth release by her American duo with bassist Mark Dresser and drummer Jim Black. In contrast with the trio's earlier *Toward... To West* (Enja), which featured an ambitious 30 minute suite, the pieces Fujii composed for *Junction* are mostly on a smaller scale, their sensitive percussion shimmering contrasting with musical bass and Fujii's largely hi-energy piano.

Fujii first went to the United States in 1965 to study jazz at the Berklee School of Music. Later she studied at the New England Conservatory, where Ran Blake's

department was a crucible of Third Stream composition. She founded her own label because she couldn't find an outlet for her two-piano recording with Paul Bley, *Something About Water*. But her music came to wider attention through two 90s releases on Leo – the duo album *How Many* with her husband Tamura, and *South Wind* with a 15 piece orchestra. On last year's *Double Take* (Ewe), she applied her exploratory East-West aesthetic to the arrangements of South Wind by dividing the double set between big bands from Japan and New York.

The contrast between her Japanese and American groups is sharply defined – the group on *Vulcan* is furious, bombastic even, while Yoshida's fearsome vocalulations are complemented by Tamura's flamboyant, heavily vocalised trumpet. The cavernous bass guitar of Takeharu Hayakawa, from Dr Utemu Band, and Yoshida's massive presence on drums, encourage the pianist to a more declaratory mode than on her US recordings. "Jazz is the music that has been developed to embrace many cultures' tastes," Fujii continues. "Everyone has their own unique expression, and nationality can be one of the elements that causes this. But when I played with Natsuki, Hayakawa and Yoshida, I didn't think about [the need to state] 'We are Japanese.'"

The experiment of working with Tatsuya Yoshida was especially interesting. "Tatsuya is a very unique drummer who doesn't play jazz style," and Natsuki doesn't play bebop licks. I really wanted to put their uniqueness into my music." How did the recording with Tatsuya come about? "We have been playing together

for more than two years now," she responds. "I went to a jazz club in Tokyo to listen to Masabumi Kikuchi's trio, and Tatsuya was in the band. Right after that I heard Ruins at Town in New York... There are very few drummers that I like, and I'm not so crazy about jazz-style drummers."

The traditional Japanese elements informing her music were picked up relatively late in her development. "I had been studying classical music from the age of four to 20, and began to play jazz after that," she recalls. "Only then did I begin to learn Japanese singing. It was an experience. I found my Japanese identity. I was very excited with Japanese music – more than 'very.'" Her attitude towards the Western classical music that constitutes her 'roots' is more ambivalent. Though she's said that her classical training at first got in the way of improvisation, the affect of her recent April Shower CD with violinist Mark Feldman on Ewe (reviewed in *The Wire* 206) was surprisingly classical. "When I began to study classical piano, I had more fun improvising than practising the stuff my teacher gave me," she qualifies. "I wanted to improvise, and that is the reason that I stopped playing classical music. But I often listen to contemporary classical music, and probably I get a big influence from it." She's a special fan of the late Toru Takemitsu, for instance. "I love his music, because of the space he made in it," she asserts. "He is very special because he could make silence in that way." *Junction* is out now on Ewe; *Vulcan* is out on Libra. Satoko Fujii is on tour in November; see *Out* There for details.

Bitstream

It is with sadness that we report that Rob Mitchell, one of the pioneering electronic label wags, passed away on 8 October after a long bout with cancer. >> And condolences to skateboard kids and snowboarders the world over. The Beastie Boys' *Grand Royal* label cessed operations on 31 August due to "mounting debts, decreasing assets and increasingly harsh industry conditions". At press time the status of the label's acts, including Alan Teenage Riot, Luscious Jackson, At The Drive In and Ben Lee, was up in the air >> Jumpy! at the NFI: the National Film Theatre on London's South Bank will be presenting a season of jazz screenings in January 2002. The series will feature unedited programmes that originally aired on TV in the 50s and 60s, including footage of Thelma Houston, Dazy Gillespie, Duke Ellington, Ben Webster, Coleman Hawkins, Oscar Peterson, Count Basie, Errol Garner, Billie Holiday, Sarah Vaughan, Ella Fitzgerald, Wes Montgomery, Dave Brubeck, Woody Herman, Tony Bennett and Frank Sinatra >> A res to celebrate

Steve Allen's power trio Shellac will curate next year's All Tomorrow's Parties in the UK (the Sonic Youth curried event scheduled last month in LA was cancelled in the wake of the terrorist attacks). Confirmed so far are: The Fall, The Ex, Will Oldham, Blonde Redhead, Rachel's, The Breeders, Robby Flee, Plush, Low, Dead Moon, Silverworm, Lonesome Organist, Thelma Houston, Shipping News, Neurosis, Aweolider, Danielson Family and, obviously, Shellac. The event, as always, will take place at the Camber Sands Holiday Centre on the Sussex coast. However, ATP will take place over two weekends, 19-21 April and 26-28 April, with download line-ups. Go to www.alltomorrowsparties.co.uk for more info >> Bewitched wail. Next year Brian Wilson will bring his pet sounds to the UK for his first ever solo gig outside the US and Japan. The former Beach Boy will play at the Royal Festival Hall from 28-30 January 2002 >> Achin Sepanor's *Little Plateau* label will celebrate its 100th release by publishing a book concerning oil with electronic musical discourse in a binary age. The label is inviting writers across the fields of music, media theory, philosophy, software programming and art to contribute. Projected essays include Kim Cascone's 'Grave, Sequence,

System: The Chain Of Abstractions In Post-Digital Music', Achin Wellshied's 'Interface', Wire contributor Philip Sherburne's 'Documentary In Electronic Music', Tim Hecker's 'Politics Of Minus: Granular Synthesis And The Current Technological/Aesthetic Impasse' >> you get the idea >> Contemporary Music Network celebrates its 30th birthday this month with events in London and Huddersfield (see *Out There*). November will also see the publication of *Changing Platforms*, a 100 page book with two accompanying CDs covering the musicians and composers whose work has been presented by CMN. During that month, www.unknownpublicradio.com will host a special internet radio programme with streaming audio and video from the CMN archives >> On 25 January 2002, Wire contributor Ben Watson will stage *Mezz Nine*, a celebration of the work of Oedipus Kurt Schwitters at London's V&A museum. In the dance, slides of the museum's Schwitters collection will be shown, while musicians like Bob Cobbing, Lili Combi, Derek Bailey, Mark Pary, Simon Fell, Mick Beck, Rhodri Davies and Pat Thomas are, ports Tom Raworth, Maggie O'Sullivan, Out To Lunch and Adrian Dennis, participate in an hour-long collective improvisation. **THE TRAVELLER**

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HYMNS

Global Ear: Isan

A survey of sounds from around the planet. This month: Jerry Hopkins feasts on Thailand's curious hillbilly fusion food that's become a national chart dish



Hillbilly jambie: Pimpa Pormsri, right, and catch-up singer

Not so long ago, som tam – a fiery green papaya salad – was known as 'peasant food'. Because it originated in Thailand's impoverished and densely populated, rural north east, in a section called Isan, it wasn't regarded as fit for 'proper' Thai mouths. With the migration of at least a million people from that region – to work in the factories and in the tourism and construction industries that fuelled much of the country's economic boom – they brought the dish to Bangkok, and in a few years it started appearing on mom-and-pop menus, then on 'proper' ones, and now it can be found in Thai restaurants around the world, and may fairly be called a national dish.

Some people say the same thing could happen to Isan's music. It's now sweeping Thailand, going 'mainstream', the way the salad did. Companion to what was once called hillbilly music in America is not inappropriate, because the various strains of music from Isan frequently describe the lives and social problems of Thailand's poor the way Country used to in America, and it is performed emotionally, providing a refreshingly vibrant alternative to the formulaic and instantly forgettable Canto-pop that flees so much of the music across Asia. The music itself is characterised by an insistent keyboard that almost sounds as if there might be a stoned snakecharmer nearby with a basket of sleepy snakes.

Generally, this South East Asian Country music is called luk thung (pronounced 'look tung' and translating as 'child of the fields'). Isan borders Cambodia and Laos; the traditions and instruments of those smaller countries have influenced their bigger, more modern neighbour. There are significant differences between Laotian mor lam and mor lam sing and Khmer kramvum, for example, but all generally are put under the luk thung umbrella in much the same way bluegrass and Western swing and other distinct sounds shared space on a single Billboard music chart.

Luk thung first emerged from Isan in the 1960s and 1970s about the same time that the United States built airbases in Thailand (some of them in Isan) and Bangkok became a preferred R&B destination for GIs during America's Indochina war. The cultural and political impact of a suddenly intensive foreign presence in Thailand made an impression on the local musicians, as they adopted jeans and T-shirts, let their hair grow, and embraced rock 'n' roll.

The musicians often incorporated the sound of native instruments of wood and bamboo, and lyrics rarely strayed from the problems and causes of the Thais, even when some English phrases were added, as in Carabao's hit, "Made in Thailand", an eco-nationalistic song that told Thais to stop buying stuff made by foreigners. Others took up the cause of the farm girl pressed by poverty into prostitution. As in Country music, the tone often ranged from poignant to angry.

Luk thung went into semi-retirement in the 1980s as Thailand experienced a period of military coups, social uncertainty and massive industrial development, beginning its comeback in the 1990s following a decade of dominance by Western recording acts (even Michael Jackson appeared in concert in Bangkok during this period). The revival was driven in part by the success of Luk Thung FM, which began broadcasting 24 hours a day in 1997. Two years later, the life of Phumthuang Daengthien, known as the Queen of Thai Country Song (think Loretta Lynn or Tammy Wynette), who died in 1992 aged 33, was made into a TV mini-series.

A number of odd events occurred during the making of the series: the singer's songs emerging from a computer that wasn't turned on; a missing script that reappeared only after the writer paid her respects to a statue of Phumthuang built after the singer's cremation in a Suphan Bun temple. When these eerie stories became known, and someone claimed to win the lottery after visiting the statue, the temple became a pilgrimage site. Today, thousands rub the bark of a big tree on the grounds, looking for those magic numbers, and four more statues have been erected.

Formerly snubbed by urban hipsters and the Thai 'High-So' (short for 'high society'), the music found new fans in the expanding middle class, especially among white-collar workers and fashion-conscious teenagers. Bangkok schools formed luk thung clubs, presenting regular concerts; Rangsit University even produced an album of anguished songs about campus life. Although they haven't been particularly successful, Sony, Universal, Warner and EMI have set up Thai music divisions.

Nor is there much money to be made at home, at least not by Western standards. Usually a luk thung singer is paid US\$500-1000 per concert, not bad considering the country's average annual per capita

income is under \$3000. Personal appearances often generate more income than record sales, in part because of the widespread counterfeiting: the leading label, Grammy, has just reduced its CD price by half in an effort to compete with the bootleggers.

Many of the new singers, such as Apasorn Naskornawan, Chakrapan (Got) Jakraphand, Dao Mayuree, Pimpa Pormsri, Naree Sri Racha and Yul Yarteech became teen idols. Today's stars even include a blue-eyed Norwegian social worker-turned-singer, Jonas (pronounced Jonat: Thais have trouble pronouncing the 's') Anderson, and the Dutch-British member of a religious charity called The Family, Christy (Krit-tee) Gibson, who have learned to enunciate the lyrics properly, and to howl from the lungs, duplicating the severe vibrato that telegraphs the music's emotion. Such techniques come naturally to Thai vocalists, but Anderson admits he has to learn the songs note for note.

With all this new popularity and social acceptance, the number of Country music labels has grown tenfold, and there are now more than 100 vocalists with recordings – three times more than in 1996. Where once luk thung singers didn't need to be physically attractive and success relied solely on vocal prowess, now young, good looking stars predominate, several of them making feature films along with music videos that get regular exposure on Thai language TV stations. An increasing number have their own Web pages. Where once a patronage system in the luk thung business saw famous singers with up to a hundred dancers, musicians, comedians and other less famous singers on their payrolls, now most performers work alone.

Bangkok's Tawan Isan Daeng is a typical club. It's a huge, dark warehouse of a room that serves a menu of Isan dishes and is popular with families as well as with young men and women homesick for Isan and looking for a cheap night out. When the group appears, accompanied by a line-up of dancers in matching outfits and a procession of vocalists, the small dancefloor in front of the stage fills with the middle-aged and young alike, repeating the easy, gliding steps and sinuous wagging of arms and wrists held above their heads that characterises simple Isan dance, backed by the drone and thump and ync message that, for an evening, takes them home. □

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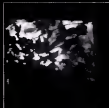
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MONOS, 360°

Following two self-released CDR titles, this is the third release by Darren Tate's project *Monos*, featuring collaborations with Colin Potter that combine field recordings with electronic processing (CD: NOM 8)

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Lol Coxhill

Invincible Jokebook is a collection of jokes and riddles that are guaranteed to make you laugh.



Born Lowen Coxhill in Portsmouth in 1932, Lot Coxhill was first inspired to play alto saxophone by hearing Charlie Parker. In 1949, he won a *Melody Maker* live competition in High Wycombe for dancing to "Ornithology". Immediately attracted to musical freedom, he bought Lennie Tristano's "Intuition" on 78rpm in 1950. Gifted with an incredible ear (a Coxhill retrospective at the Purcell Room was held up when he realised that the two grand pianos supplied by the South Bank were a quarter tone out), a legendary memory for song structures and a singular sense of melody, Coxhill refuses to be bound by stylistic constraints, popping up like some benign spectre whenever a new musical movement is happening on the ground. His weird, wayward, twisting soprano saxophone has wandered over JBs style funk with The Gass, sax with Rico Rodriguez, R&B with Alexis Korner, Progressive rock with Kevin Ayers, punk with *Diary and drum 'n' bass*.

His debut album, *Ear Of The Beholder*, an amazing collage of music, spoken word and street recordings, was issued on John Peel's Dandelion label in 1971. He played at the very first Campus Week in 1977 alongside Evan Parker and Derek Bailey. In the same year, he toured with theatrical punksters The Damned.

In 1980, he and Morgan Fisher from Mott The Hoople issued *Slow Music*, ambient before Ambient, and now about to be reissued. In the mid-80s, Coxhill formed a surreal electro-improv trio with guitarist Mike Cooper and percussionist Roger Turner named The Recedents. In 1990, Stefan Jaworzyn's Shock label issued a superb LP, *Lot Coxhill Solo*.

Nowadays he remains a mercurial figure in London's experimental music world. He often guests with Birdyak, supplying bizarre melodic responses to the 'poésie sonore' of Bob Cobbing. Perhaps the best way of catching Coxhill's incomparable playing is a chance encounter: busking on Hungerford Bridge, playing under a sack during a terror art performance by Ian Hinchcliffe, playing solo behind the audience at a jazz festival. His poignant, inquisitive soprano playing is an elegant and effective demolition of generic and generational barriers. This month, Mash Records release *Spectral Soprano*, a double CD compilation spanning decades of unreleased material from the bulging Coxhill archives. The Jukebox took place in London.

RUFUS THOMAS "THE PREACHER AND THE BEAR"

FROM *DOWN THE PUSHY HILL* (LIVE AT FRS 1974)

Sounds like Rufus, when he was younger, is it? It's later than the stuff I was doing with him in 1964. It's good. I always liked his voice anyway. I saw him in London six years ago, one of his gigs. I said it was really nice to see him again. He said, "But we've never met." I said, "I don't mind that you don't remember, I remember the gigs, they were great." We did about seven with him. He said, "I've never been here before." He'd completely forgotten he'd ever been to England! He was very nice and friendly, but mostly bantane sax. We were doing pop sessions at the time and our own little gigs under the guitarist's name, The Brian Westminster Five. There was some confusion over whether it was his band – a book came out that only mentioned him. Afterward Brian left and it became The Chessmen, which was a shame, I liked playing with Brian.

Has the music been changed since 1964? There's some James Brown funk in this.

It's slicker. The bands by now were a bit more showy. I preferred the sound of the old bands, which were a bit more open and loose sounding. Some of the stuff gets overstated in this area, except by the people that really loved it in the first place.

TOMMY MCCOOK "MACKA DUB ROCKA"

FROM *HOT LIPS* (THIRD WORLD RECORD COMPANY) 1977

I've never heard this before, it's very nice. I know the tune.

They call it "Macka Dub Rocka".

[Laughs] Just the changes, I mean. We haven't got to the bridge yet. Who is it? I like the sound. Who is it? [Looks at record cover] I've seen this. I'm surprised I don't recognise it, I've got enough records with Tommy McCook on. When I was playing at Suckley Club and things like that in the 60s, things were changing, rocksteady was coming in, but this feel was there already. We used to go round and round. Some of the gigs finished about four or five in the morning, so we'd set out for an early gig and do three and then go home, start again the following afternoon, do so many gigs. We did about six different places in [London's] West End, come straight out of the Flamingo and go down the Q Club.

The chord base of this is "Prisoner Of Love", an old ballad. I've got a really nice record of Lester Young playing it. All those people at that time, Coleman Hawkins too, liked it. I still don't know if Tommy McCook played the middle section because I can't remember what it was, but they certainly played the outside bits. Even in drum 'n' bass, a lot of the old tunes keep coming round, being played slightly different rhythm-wise and with effects. When I play with Rico [Rodriguez] and Bammie [Rose] and Eddie Thornton, people like that, we play tunes that I've known for many years before I was playing them. I go and do gigs with them not knowing what we're going to play, but it's pretty well guaranteed that although I've never played it I'll know everything anyway, instinctively.

Rico has quite a jazz angle, I love playing with him in Pete Beresford's band. I had a very strange gig. Rico asked me to play at a wedding. It was Gary Crosby's band [Jazz Jamaica] for the night, but I didn't know. Rico ended up not coming because the transport was

difficult. I was the only horn player. We did some of the stuff segued [together], and I was doing some odd tunes like "Knees Up Mother Brown" and "American Patrol", and it shugged along. Bigga [Morrison] making very good [dub effect] noises in the background with all his equipment. People had a really nice time. At the end Gary said to me, "Why did you play all those tunes on a Jazz Jamaica gig?" – and I didn't know it was! I thought it was a semi-pickup band.

JOE HARRIOTT "OLEO"

FROM *ABSTRACT* (POLYGRAM) 1982

I don't know the record. [Listens] I can't think who it is. There are things that remind me of people, but different people. There was a bit like Joe Harriott there.

Is it Joe Harriott.

Is it? What record?

Abstract.

Sounds good.

It was unavailable for years, but PolyGram Jazz finally released it just before they were bought up by Universal.

I had it the time. I used to hang around with Joe quite a lot. The sound of the trumpet and the alto is a bit Ornette-y, a bit Cherry-ish, on that angle, which is quite understandable, I guess. It stands up very well, I think. Joe used to come and play at my club. When they were doing all this stuff, I knew him, which was nice because I could talk to him about it. I was a fringe fan who was occasionally allowed to play with them, I wasn't bad, but he wouldn't have wanted [me to accompany him] all the time.

The CD includes an article Harriott wrote about his music for Jazz Scene in February 1963. It's written in a very urbane style.

I remember Joe as being quite posh.

Do you recognise the drummer?

Wasn't it Bobby Ore at that time?

Yes. The drummer on other tracks was Phil Seamen.

I knew it wasn't Phil. Bobby is good, one of the best ones. You don't hear much from him. I think he's gone up north. He might be dead. He's very different from Phil. Bobby Ore rolls through it, sails through it, brilliantly, perfectly. Phil has a different kind of attack, a different kind of presence – I'm aware of the sound of his kit. He has a different kind of intensity, a certain drive to him, I like them both very much.

Do you like the alto saxophone?

That was my first instrument. There's a nice picture of me with it in the *Spectral Soprano* booklet, aged 18, in my Air Force uniform with a 'short back and sides' and too much hair on top. I only learned the basics on alto. I played it quite slowly, with a rounder sound than all the people I like. I've got a baritone at home, but I like the fact that the soprano is light. I can drag it all over the place with me and it doesn't matter whether I play it or not.

ANTHONY BRAXTON "IN THE STREET"

FROM *THIS TIME* (BYG) 1970

Is this a gig? [The recording features outdoor street recordings of car horns, revving engines and shouting] Or is the bus passenger bored so he's whipped his violin out? [Laughs]

The name of the track is "In The Street".

That's a good title for it. I don't think I can give you an opinion about this. I like some of the things that are happening, all the sounds thrown in together. I don't think a considered quality assessment is required. I'm quite happy to listen to it for a while... people we know [Braxton's group includes Leo Smith, Leroy Jenkins

Invisible Jukebox

and Steve McCall) doing bits and pieces of random stuff. Some of it sounds live, some of it like they've put things together. I can't tell. [Looks at cover] Anthony Braxton? I'm surprised I haven't heard this. The musicians are all good people who like a bit of noise, and so do I.

DIARY "SEASON TICKET"

FROM GOT TO BE IN LOVE BY TUESDAY (DISFUNCTIONAL) 1987

I don't know who it is. Who is it?

You've played with them.

Diary? [Joanist] John Plank, of course it is. I just couldn't place his voice. I've known him for years, does some nice things with him.

Pretty aggressive stuff. I've taken friends along and some get offended.

Punk bands are like horror films. If they're extremely good or extremely bad, they're great. I'm not too interested in the ones in the middle. I know John Plank through the poetry people, Bob Cobbing or Jeff Nuttall. He was in Fluxus, which sounds interesting though I was never involved. Punk is OK. I enjoyed the gigs I did with The Damned. I got on all right with them. The one who's a mate of mine is Lu Edmonds [also of Spizz Energy, 3 Mustaphas 3 and PL]. He's a fantastic musician, he was playing bass, but he was into all sorts of things. He's worked with Tuvan musicians [Yeh-Kha] and people from all over. He isn't as famous as the others, though 3 Mustaphas 3 are well known.

I didn't much like the Damned record I was in [Music For Pleasure]. It was a big expensive studio. I just did one alto overdub, but it was a bit mellow. It got really good reviews, but it was not that good an alto solo. It was written up as if it was something special, just because I was playing with The Damned I suppose – 'if The Damned get him in on alto, it's going to be good. So it is'. But it's not one of the best records. Some of the gigs were great. I really did just play free stuff. They wanted it. The audience thought it was weird, but I was just improvising anyway.

Could you hear yourself?

Sometimes. Occasionally! [Laughs] I blew as hard as I possibly could and hoped that someone was dealing with it at the other end. I used to upset the audience by wearing plus fours and a check pullover. If I had any hair at all I would brush it out and hobble on stage looking quite old and totally alien to the scene and then just play as loudly as possible, free improvisation. People used to get really upset! If anything was likely to cause upset at a punk gig, it was me just standing there like somebody's dad. There was one where people decided they'd like to go more on me than anyone else. So I stood back just far enough so that you could see it flying in the lights, but not close enough for it to hit me. Then I was pretending to pick it off my clothes and eat it. The band got complaints from the audience about this disgusting bloke on stage.

I remember meeting a punk at a gig you did at St Michael's Church Hall in Leeds in 1979. She would come to see you improvise after seeing you with The Damned.

Some liked it. They thought it was completely bonkers. Some of the venues were large, but the tiny clubs were nice. I did one of the farewell concerts at the Rainbow in Finsbury Park. Some people are good with big crowds. Iggy Pop is good at seeing people up, for example.

MATCHING MOLE "FLORA RIDGET"

FROM LITTLE RED RECORD (CBS) 1992

I'm trying to work out which keyboard this is. I'm sure Steve Miller [leader of Delivery with singer Carol

Grimes] had one of these. It's an early 70s instrument.

Does the drummer remind you of anyone?

Yes it does, but I can't think who. It sounds like Robert Wyatt...

That's right.

Is it Soft Machine? With Phil Miller on guitar.

You're right about Phil Miller.

It sounds like that team – it sounds very English. I like that quality. Some people in the States try to play like this. That'll be Gave McRae on keyboards.

On that track he was playing Brian Eno's synthesizer.

He's prepared a proper little intro there. It's a definite vein of music. I've played it with Steve Miller. Spectral Soprano has a nice short piece with Steve, with me using a Watkins Cypriot echo unit. Steve's keyboard is very plummy and with my key it's very floppy – very much of its time. Then punk came in. At that time, Ted Milton was doing the Blue Show – like a Punch and Judy show, but it was all policemen. He had the theatre on his head and walked through the crowds. He also played very good, hard alto. His band Blurt was excellent.

ARCHIE SHEPP "NO ONE KNOWS YOU WHEN YOU'RE DOWN AND OUT"

FROM TROUBLE IN MIND (STEREOPHONIC) 1980

"Nobody Knows You..." I like it. I was waiting to see if I think it's Archie Shepp.

It is.

Oh good. He sounds as if he's in better neck. I've got one where he's really in a bad way on soprano, it's very shaky. I love some of his playing. Does he improvise on this?

Not really. To my ears, he's playing like a tenor player – Ben Webster on soprano.

This feels really nice, this one. I haven't heard so much of him in recent years, but I like the early things. Everyone played those impulsive recordings in the late 60s. This sounds like they've stayed somewhere playing after everyone else has gone, which I occasionally do. Not out to impress, just playing.

Bailey and Braxton both have a very negative view of Shepp.

Anthony is such an accomplished player and he really works at it. They're like opposites.

Shepp wrote plays before he formed a group. I think his music is very theatrical – very effective – but I can see that technophile heads might object.

It's a very different approach. I like the early things; he's slowed down a bit later on.

DEREK BAILEY & JOHN BUTCHER "HIGH VORTEX"

FROM VORTICES & ANGELS (EMANEM) 2000

Is it Derek on guitar? Haven't decided about the saxophone yet. Is it two saxophones?

No, just one.

Is it John Butcher? Is this the new record on Emanem? I've got to go and see [Emanem boss] Martin Davidson, there must be ten new things he has put out which I want. Trouble is that he always wants to give them to you, but I want to give him money. Best record company in the world – for my taste. Certainly the best person to put out improvised music.

I like the way the records have a definite 'Emanem' look, yet the players completely define the music.

He asks you what you think and what you want on there. Even if there's something he really likes, if you don't want it, it doesn't go on. Best label I've been with – he sends the record for you to check before it comes out. You know actually what it's going to be like. Or alternatively you can choose to trust him, and

it'll be fine that way too.

When did you first hear free improvisation?


I first started going to see John Stevens and Spontaneous Music Ensemble at the Little Theatre Club in January 1966, right at the beginning. I was busking in Leicester Square at the time, and I played with him so many times it all runs into one. I was interested in jazz-related stuff, I suppose I read in the Melody Maker that they were doing it up there. The first one I remember was with Trevor Watts and maybe Derek. I was in awe of everybody there. It was a long while before I played, even though I was invited sometimes. When I did I went with Chris Bateson – trumpet player, did a couple of records with Prince Lasha, I think he wanted to play 'I Can't Get Started' and I was very embarrassed to play a tune. Jeff Clyne told me – ten years later – that he remembered it, and that it was good. Varyan Weston's sister was involved in running it. It was a beautiful place. The first time I heard AMM was there, and I really liked that immediately. I would like to have played with Derek more. I loved his playing. I think I'd play better with him now than I would have done then, but he doesn't think of me first if he needs a soprano saxophone [laughs]. Well, there was no reason not to use Steve Lacy or Evan Parker, I don't disapprove of that. Derek's playing sounded right to me straight away, constantly interesting. If I had to choose between listening to Derek for 20 minutes or for an hour, I'd be sorry to miss the 20 minutes, but I'd like to listen to him for an hour. I especially like him solo. I remember a gig in the early 70s at Repton School I organised with John Stevens, Trevor Watts, Derek, me and a bass player. Derek actually played a ballad at one point, but nobody else was, so that was all right. I gave a little dialogue which people liked.

Derek always laughs when people talk about free improvisation being 'invented' at a certain date.

It wasn't a classifiable musical form until the 60s. I can get more involved in it as a listener than most other music. The very fact that it's open and you don't know what's coming next, you can't decide beforehand what's coming. Well, unfortunately, very often you can, but not when it's the real thing. There are a lot of people around who you know are going to play specific things as opposed to really try and get on with it and effing. You can't avoid having phrases. You don't look for them, but recognisable things emerge – nobody would know who they're listening to otherwise.

Derek and yourself both have immediately recognisable voices. It's paradoxical – the more you try to be free, the more personality there is.

It's the way you avoid playing the same things all the time! I know I can be listening back to something I've done and I think it's all right, then I hear a phrase that I know I must have played a thousand times before and it really pokes me off [laughs]. I sometimes use phrases to get to somewhere else, not preconceived, but at a moment something briefly happens that is going to take it somewhere else. You get in and out of it. I loved Charlie Parker when I heard him at the age of 11, but so many recordings are available it becomes the opposite of what the free improvisers try for. It'd be nice to hear someone like freely playing with Company, to see if he could approach it himself. I'd like to hear Hendrix playing with Derek. I wrote an article on Hendrix once, but the editors turned it down because it wasn't axe-kicking enough. Gerry Fitzgerald [free guitarist who recorded with Cocteau in 1975's Fless in Custard] was his roadie, and I said Hendrix could have learned quite a lot talking to Gerry. [Listens anxiously] Quite whizz chaps, aren't they? You never know where the next note is going to come from. That's the situation I like. □





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The Wire
"Raised by the dysfunctional
family of Lou Reed, Snog and
PJ Harvey. Some as scrubland,
cool as a cow-bagel, indie moan,
and cabalistic and utterly
hynotic." *Times Out*

herman düne
SWITZERLAND HERITAGE
new album



"Almost all the music which mercilessly surrounds us today has the same underlying structure: neverending gabbliness," complained trombonist/composer Radu Malfatti recently. And the classical avant garde, he continues, is "intensively talkative" (*The Wire* 211). Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho is no minimalist – nor is she any other kind of 'ist', strictly speaking. Not even Malfatti could describe her acute and beautifully crafted compositions as gabulous. As so often, the personality seems to match the music. Soft-spoken, intense and shy, Saariaho is on a rare promotional visit to London, and we meet at the Soho offices of her publishers, Chester Music. At 48 she's a strikingly original force who combines live instrumental resources and IRCAM-inspired electronics. She is well known in her native Finland, where music – especially that of Sibelius – is considered essential to the nation's cultural identity.

With a series of London Philharmonic Orchestra concerts and a CMJ tour starting this month, plus her first major label CD release about to come out on Sony Classical, the recognition Saariaho has enjoyed in New

registers and using colours. In a way it has to do with orchestration. And I liked to play organ in church because I hated to perform in public, and the organist is always hidden. Also," she adds, almost as an afterthought, "I always had spiritual interests."

But it was her more practical aspirations, rather than her fanciful desire to become a composer, that turned out to be the fantasy. Presented with the boring reality of a church-bound life, she understood that she had to compose. "It was a struggle," she asserts, "but there came the moment when I realised that this is the only thing I can do... I had the last crisis when I was about 20. I felt I was not good enough to be a composer. I really hated the idea that I would be some kind of average composer. Then came the very desperate stage when I felt every second of my life would be wasted if I was not striving to compose. That's the only way not to waste my life."

In 1976-81, she studied with Finnish composer Paavo Heininen at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki. About that period, she once made a comment to the effect that composing was a man's world, with few

great revelation was hearing the 'spectral music' of French composers Gérard Grisey and Tristan Murail at Darmstadt, at that time still the home of the serial modernist aesthetic. "It was a fantastic revelation," she recalls. "This was still in the post-serial era, and their music sounded fantastically fresh, and completely different." Their work inspired her to move to Paris the following year to attend IRCAM, Pierre Boulez's foundation for research into music and acoustics. She decided to stay in the city, where she still lives.

Stockhausen's music had vividly shown how the matter we hear as one harmonious sound can be deconstructed into a collection of individual overtones – in other words, a single sound is also a resonant acoustic complex. This is the basis for the contemporary approach to composition known as spectralism. "It was first of all a reaction against serial music, where one is dealing quite mathematically with the notes," explains Saariaho. "The idea in spectralism is that we are dealing with audible structures, and we want to know the physics of the sounds, and we want to use that knowledge to make music for the ears, not the eyes. Gérard [Grisey] was analysing instrumental sounds, which he used very carefully in orchestration – he made the orchestra sound like no orchestra before. His music, and Tristan Murail's, sounded completely different to the serial harmonic structures which were based more on abstraction, or some intellectual game, than the actual sounding result."

Saariaho began to use computer analysis to produce harmonic structures out of sound spectra – preferably with pitched instrumental sounds as the basis. Noise – that is, sound with no harmonic spectrum – also has a place in her music; sometimes she uses environmental or natural sounds to generate more musical tensions, often resolving them step by step to pitched sound. She could be described as a leading exponent of spectral composition, but even more than most composers, Saariaho fights shy of labeling. "I don't count myself among spectral composers any more than post-serial," she avers. "When I was building my musical language, I found useful elements from many different sources. Then, little by little, piece by piece, these elements were transformed to fit my needs and become part of my language."

In contrast to Saariaho, some spectralist composers, the Romanian Horatiu Radulescu among them, have avoided electronics. "You don't need to be interested in computers and electronics to be a spectral composer," she explains. "But it's true, they often go together, because you're interested in creating new kinds of sounds... I first wanted to amplify sounds, because I was interested in certain playing techniques which were very quiet. Then I started to treat sounds with reverbs and other effects because I was always unhappy with the room acoustics. Contemporary music is often played in very dry places, for instance, which I always really hated. So I started to create my own acoustics. But when I went to IRCAM my first interest was to analyse sounds and reconstruct them with a sound synthesis."

Some composers assimilate many different influences, others focus solely on their own singular visions. Saariaho sits very much in the second category. "I have a very big concern with – originality isn't the word – authenticity and sincerity," she asserts. "It's not my task, and not any serious artist's task, to repeat any recipes or pick up things here and there... I think that, finally, there is only one music I can write. And that music today is different to ten years ago." These issues come up when we discuss one of her most beautiful compositions, the shimmering *Five Japanese Gardens* for percussion and live electronics – a recording of it has just been resissued on Prisma (Montaigne), together with a new CD-ROM. The piece is a series of

Using electronics to
extend the possibilities
of her favourite
classical
instrumentalists has
brought leading
Finnish composer
Kaija Saariaho closer
to realising her
music's spectral and
spiritual ambitions on
a human scale
Words: Andy Hamilton.
Photos: Malcolm Crouthers

Music circles over the last decade and more is at last looks set to 'cross-over'. Her soundworld runs from ravishing textures of great delicacy and refinement to the dissonant soundmasses found at the more industrial end of New Complexity. 80s pieces that mix performers and electronics, such as *Verbindungen* and especially *Two for chamber orchestra*, tape and live electronics, realised in 1986-87 at IRCAM in Paris, can make for a tough listen. But the exquisite *Japanese Gardens* (1993-95) for percussion and live electronics, dedicated to the late Toru Takemitsu, presents no such difficulties.

Born in 1952, Saariaho didn't come from a musical background – in fact her parents thought her dream of becoming a composer was crazy. "My family had no idea what this career could be," she recalls. "Everybody knew that I was musical, but since I was shy, I could not be a virtuoso interpreter. After studying music she thought of serving as a church organist in some small Finnish village. "I loved music, I wanted to live with music," she continues. "I loved organ-playing very much – this whole thing about the

female role models. "I think it's very much a practical question," she offers, by way of clarification. "It had to do with the development of society – how could a woman have time? And if my parents could still think it was a weird choice, how was it 100 years ago? An impossible choice. So I don't think it was the fact that women didn't imagine music." But how has this situation affected her career? "How can I say?" she counters. "In the beginning it was a disadvantage, for sure. Many times I was not taken seriously at all. But as this because of being a woman, or are all young composers treated like that? Later, I've had many jealous colleagues who think it's a big advantage."

Finding the Finnish scene too claustrophobic, in 1981 Saariaho moved to Freiburg, Germany to study with modernist masters Brian Ferneyhough and Klaus Huber. Influences in her early career were varied. "It was very helpful for me to study Ligeti's scores," she explains. "I learned a lot from Xenakis's string music, and I loved Szymborski very much, and I admire Messiaen enormously still. Ravel at some point was very much an influence, and Bach always." But her



impressions of gardens in Kyoto, composed in tribute to Takemitsu, in which tape extracts – pulses, nature sounds, ritual songs and recorded percussion – are triggered by a percussionist. "I think Takemitsu was a great composer, and very sensitive," she declares. "I wanted to dedicate this piece to him because I wrote it in Japan, and I visited these gardens in Kyoto, which I know he loved."

Saariaho and Takemitsu are vastly different composers, but there's something of a parallel in their later careers. Late-period Takemitsu seemed to renounce modernism in favour of neo-Romanticism. In the 90s Saariaho has also shown a greater interest in melody, though arguably also a greater concern with classical form. "Well, at some point in your life as a composer you get detached, and don't think any more about what your colleagues or critics might think of your new works," she comments. "When you are young you are very concerned about finding your own identity and creating something of your own, writing a new kind of music, being modern, or then expressly not being modern. But the deeper and deeper you get into your

variation form, or sonata form? This is never the way I live. I need to reinvent the form every time when starting a new piece. Maybe I'm reinventing the same thing again and again. But I must have a fresh feeling, a unique feeling, about every piece. I wouldn't say to myself that because it worked so well in that earlier piece, now I'm going to use that solution again."

She has said that it can be a struggle to select the material – the harmonic structures or even the instrumentation – for any given piece, but once she's done so, there's only one way the piece can develop. Both the material and its development reveal her Finnish heritage, though Saariaho finds it hard to say exactly how. "Maybe one thing is this relation to the material, which is so serious and wants to be profound," she speculates. "One couldn't say that my music is often playful, and that might be Finnish. Sometimes I feel that this is a fault, that I should find more joy in my music – and maybe I will. That doesn't need to be superficial, deep joy also exists. Maybe that's one of my tasks for the future." Some people interpret the coolness and emotional detachment in

performers, such as conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen, singer Dawn Upshaw, flautist Cornelia Horinga and cellist Anssi Karttunen. "I always imagine music very consciously when I write," she says. "I somehow imagine very physically, so it helps my imagination when I think about a certain performer whom I admire." Saariaho now treats the electronic part of her music as a kind of extension of live instruments.

I ask her how she brings flexibility to live electronics, as Pierre Boulez has tried to with his 'score-follower' application. "Well, recently I don't use much rhythmic material in the electronic parts," she replies. "Secondly, I don't use tapes any more at all. The score-follower is a program which recognises a pitch and then plays a sound or event that's programmed to be played simultaneously with that pitch. As I use playing techniques which vary the sound constantly with different kinds of vibratos, for example, the pitch detection is not so easy in my music. Normally I have soundfiles which are triggered from the computer by the performer. So I have a patch and a pedal for the performer, who at a certain point triggers the next step in the patch. The reverb can be changed, or there's a new sound coming, and so it gives more flexibility for the player." But she still has an affection for tape works like *Sölleben* (Söl Life) from 1987-88. "It's a radiophonic piece," she asserts. "Radio is a great way of distributing music and ideas, so I would have nothing against doing this kind of work again. But maybe more for radio than for a concert. Or combining tape music with a video or film project."

Despite her disavowal of influences, she shares with Stockhausen a major preoccupation with breaking away from concert hall stereo listening. In an earlier interview (*The Wire* 177) Saariaho talked about how she used the spatialisation program at IRCAM in Lyon (*From Afar*) for soprano and electronics – the piece appears on her *Private Gardens* and *Prisma CDs*. Loudspeakers around the audience create a constantly changing space, and so the electronic sounds aren't heard as coming from them. "I used this same way of enlarging the control of space in my opera *L'Amour De Lon*, in which the electronic part is an extension of the orchestration," she explains. "I also have future projects in which this idea of building different spaces around the audience has a very central place." A similar approach is followed on *Amers*, the cello concerto featured on her outstanding new collection for Sony. Composed in 1992 – at the tail end of her 'timbre' period – it uses a special microphone developed at IRCAM, which allows each of the four cello strings to be amplified separately through four different loudspeakers. Each string can be given a different delay, creating a 3D-like sonic image.

The Sony album contains some of her most compelling non-electronic works of the last decade: *Graal Theatre*, a violin concerto for Gidon Kremer from 1995, and *Chateau De L'Amé*, a song cycle for soprano Dawn Upshaw from 1996. Compared to her other releases, this one has an altogether glossier production, even down to listing clothing credits for her cover photo (Annie Vaikama, Janni Renvall and Lageros, fashion fans). "What can I say?" she laughs. "I have nothing against nice clothes and nice CD covers, even if the music inside is the essential matter." Her more limited use of electronics on this album reveals her abiding concern – technology at the service of live performers. "My interest in using electronics seems always to remain the same," Saariaho emphasises. "It's to restore musically the possibilities of live performers, their space, their sound palette, or to create accompanying textures for them." Despite her spiritual professions, the result is a profoundly human and humanistic electronic music for the new millennium. □ The *Prisma CD/CD-ROM* is out now on Montaigne. *Graal Theatre/Château De L'Amé/Amers* is released this month on Sony

"When you are
young you are very
concerned about
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deeper you get into
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couldn't care less
about superficial
labels"

music, you couldn't care less about these more or less superficial labels. In a way, the music is dictated for you. Takemitsu wrote the music that he felt had to be written. Maybe the later music sounds more conventional. I don't know his reasons, really." Though Saariaho has agreed that she's a modernist, she insists that "I never put any labels on myself."

The changes in her own music have been brought about by her grand project of the last decade, the opera *L'Amour De Lon* (Love From Afar), premiered last year at the Salzburg Festival. It's part of a process in which the voice has gradually assumed a greater importance for Saariaho. "I wanted the singers to sing," she says simply. "So I couldn't imagine any kind of purely modernistic approach in which the voice is broken into syllables and abstract sounds. I really wanted to deal with the melodic aspect and the special feelings that sing music can evoke. So that started to be a priority in my music. As for the formal aspect, I don't think I'm the person to speak about that, but I don't think my music has become more conventional. I always consider form completely impossible to separate from material. I never think 'Should I use

her music as very Finnish. For her part, she has commented that her homeland's location is very special, especially the light. But, she smiles, "In Finland, everyone says my music has a French flavour; in France, they write that this music comes from the bleak north."

Like British composer Jonathan Harvey, Saariaho favours a combination of live instruments and electronics – though her spiritual content is less to the fore than Harvey's. Such a combination of resources inevitably raises the spectre of Stockhausen, though he's less a key figure for Saariaho than he is for Harvey. "During my studies I listened to a lot of Stockhausen's music, as well as many other more or less contemporary composers," she explains. "[His] *Gesang Der Jünglinge* was an important work for me, but otherwise Stockhausen never had a special position."

The individual qualities particular instrumentalists bring to a work cannot be so easily replaced, she continues. More than most composers, perhaps, she has her preferred instruments and favoured



THE VIEW FROM DOWN- TOWN

The attack on
the World Trade
Center came
close to ripping
the heart out
of downtown
NYC's borderless
zone where
unceasing
waves of
multicultural
diversity have
thrived over
the past two
decades. In this
survey by a
collection of New
York musicians
and their
correspondents,
we take the
temperature of
a musical
community
getting back on
its feet.
Illustration
Non-Format

The air quality is not good

BY LEE BARNARD

It's hard to describe what it's like here. The air wasn't so bad today. They're keeping the dust down, big trucks spraying the streets night and day. All streets have cement barricades running the edges of the sidewalks, backed with chainlink rent-a-fence; National Reserves in camouflage and cops on every corner. Yesterday for the first time since we've been back, I went to see for myself. Rode my bike around the entire perimeter, stopping at all the blockades where the tourists and curious locals with their cams gathered — all too stunned to snap. Just staring...

Liberty and Broadway looking west, you could see them hosing down the big pits. Malden Lane and Broadway, one block to the north, was the most astoundingly fierce sight. Some building I did not recognize, big black hulking thing, had its side pulled open to reveal the entire structure, but was still standing. From the south looking north on Rector Street you could survey the whole gaping cavity, and see a large part of one of the towers still standing. Most beautiful monument of all, the way it looked. I hope they leave it, smoked up and ruined.

The streets at night are so empty. This is how Tribeca used to be. It's really humming with activity down here. All the cops and guardsmen are doing a fantastic and courteous job. They have 'hero' status to live up to, and it seems they sense it. Everyone working seems to be hauling ass to make it all happen, to patch the infrastructure as quickly as possible and to keep the recovery operation moving. Trucks, military vehicles and construction flatbeds carrying out huge grids all day long. Under the arc lights the work goes on all night, ignorant of the clock. The beams cast a brilliant column up through the air, filled with rising dust and smoke.

One image nobody got that first day was the shoes. No one got 'em, in all the reporting. That afternoon, just north of Chambers and Broadway, there was a pile of shoes on the northwest corner, up against the granite of the building there. Mostly dusty black workers' boots — lots of 'em — but also some high heels and stray singles. Well over a dozen pairs in all. What the hell were they doing there? Sitting poignant and mute, covered in fine ash and debris, they somehow summed up the whole thing: the event, the emotions, the angst.

The air quality down here, for residents and even more so for workers, is decidedly not good. Bottom line. No matter what the EPA and others say. With small children, we are especially concerned. It just can't be good for them. Funny how back in 'normal' life we'd tolerate all the local spew of trucks and buses; now that the streets are pleasantly free of them we have a different menace in the air. It smells stinky a lot of the time, burning rubber stink, and your eyes get red after awhile, throat scratchy and hoarse. I can't wear my contacts for more than half the day without itchy eyes. Not many of the workers or military are wearing masks, and they're out in the air all day. Can't be a good thing.

Tonight after a reasonably normal dinner with friends across the park, I was belatedly hunting down a copy of Friday's New York Times. The newsstand by City Hall was sold out; I walked across chambers to Morgan's Market on Reade and Hudson — no luck there either. Returning home, I tried a last, usually reliable stop — a Times streetbox just north of our place, on Broadway just above Chambers. The box was just some scaffolding, all dusty and pushed up against a large green UPS mailbox. I had to yank at it to get at the front of it. Bent down to check the date: Friday, Friday, c'mon, be Friday not Thursday... but to my amazement it was dated 11 September. I couldn't believe it. Of course we'd run out on the Wednesday and bought ALL

IMAGE COURTESY OF GREGGALAN. PHOTO BY JENNIFER LACROIX/ALAN



the papers, and the next day and the next; and the magazines as they came, but the one we talked about was the paper from the 11th – don't think many had time that day to read that one. This paper behind the glass was the last one in the box – one paper from that morning still sitting in this box all these last three weeks. When that paper was put to bed, in the early morning hours of the 11th, while most of us slept peacefully, the world was a different, more innocent place.

Music from the aist floor

BY STEPHEN VETIELLO

I spent most of this past summer with my baby daughter in the shade of the World Trade Center. Living less than 20 blocks north of the WTC and walking along the pier just above the buildings was our substitute vacation. The buildings were always there and something you were aware of, even if we rarely looked up. Two years ago, I had the unique opportunity of spending six months looking out from the 91st floor of the World Trade Center's Tower One and listening to all that passed by. I had been granted a residency along with a handful of other artists (including Kevin and Jennifer McCoy, featured in Ether Talk, *The Wire* 212) in one of the many unrented offices in the building. The residency stipulated that you had to make use of the space, with a particular focus on site specificity.

The space I was assigned was equally beautiful, ugly, awe inspiring and sort of sad. It had been the office of a Japanese bank executive. It seemed like the company had left in a hurry. Phones had been pulled out of the walls. A mug and a pair of slippers were lying in the corner of the room. Most striking, of course, was the view. My immediate reaction was that incredible feeling of looking out at all that was below me and in front of me, but also how it felt flat and unreal. It was only when I recognised the silence, shut in by windows that could not be opened, that I found a clue to how I should proceed. The challenge was to bring the sound from outside in, through very thick, sealed windows.

My first step was to affix inexpensive contact microphones to the windows, accentuating certain frequencies and taking out others until I started to hear life outside. The sounds gathered each day varied, depending on wind conditions and work that might be going on within or outside the building. At times there was a massed, unrecognisable drone. At others, I could hear people on the streets below. Planes and helicopters buzzed or stormed by. The day after Hurricane Floyd, the room was creaking like an old wooden ship.

The second set of recordings was done with a technician and friend, Bob Bielecki. I wanted to find a way to respond with sound to the lights that we saw after dusk, when the buildings faded away leaving trails of white and coloured lights across the sky. Bob wired a small photocell to one of my audio cables. By pointing the photocell into the eye of a telescope, we were able to locate and transform light frequencies into sounds. Police cars and the Colgate Clock were heard as droning tones and rhythmic static. Most of the time, I would listen through a sort of stethoscope made of the two mics fixed to the windows, sent into my headphones via a mixing desk. It is strange to imagine an intimate experience with this building that had felt so oppressive, but sitting alone late at night, I often felt I was connecting to the building in a way that no one else was. Later, at an exhibition, these sounds were played back live and from prerecorded CDs. The effect was that people who had formerly seen the view from my window as some sort of cinematic fabrication now were able to experience the vulnerability of being up in that space.

The windows of my current apartment face north, so I can't see the remains of the building or the still smouldering dust, but instead have a view of the entry point where rescue vehicles enter and leave. Crowds of people stand outside, cheering and holding signs and candles. New York has always celebrated its edge. I'm ominous how this will affect all that we produce next. Someone asked me the other day if I had been recording sounds related to the clean-up of the building, and it seemed like the last thing that I would ever want to do. A big, tough, dust-covered worker came up to me and my daughter a week ago. He asked if he could meet her. She grabbed his finger and the guy started to cry. For the moment, it definitely seems like the edge is off, or at least blurred.

Downtown is not a zip code

BY DAVID KRASHIN

"It looked like we had dropped the bomb on ourselves." So says Jean-Michel Basquiat, portraying himself, in Glenn O'Brien's *Downtown 81*, a pseudo-documentary film released this year. *Downtown* was "a war zone" 20 years ago, and downtown is a war zone now, according to reporters. Different times, different wars.

About a week after, but before the toll of the dead suddenly rose another thousand, I wanted to check in on the Knitting Factory. The Knit has only a few blocks north of the former World Trade Center, and access was through police checkpoints. Michael Dorf and company have had a tough year, and I wondered if New York's best-known New Music haunt would end up as one of the many incidental losses. (The venerable Roulette is closer, but runs on much lower overheads. *Knit* is further to the north and east, where only the sharp smell of the fires is perceptible.)

I logged on to www.knittingfactory.com and read the club's banner: "Downtown is more than a zip code". The slogan has passed me off since they introduced it a few years back. It commodifies and markets what used to be a community – the insular but genuine body of New Music devotees. And it's just stupid: downtown certainly isn't a zip code. It's a slice of mental geography totally unrelated to zip codes. There are at least 15 zip codes south of 14th Street, and one of them – 30048 – was assigned to the WTC alone.

Now, though, downtown is the "frozen zone", where traffic is forbidden, where the blizzard of choking particles large and small smothered the streets. Now downtown means: How close were you? Where were you? Or, God help me, what floor were you [or was he, or was she] on?

In the 70s, when people said downtown was a war zone, they were talking about the results of a bankrupt government cutting firefighting, police protection, and garbage collection in the inner city. The landlords abandoned or torched their properties and left the ruins to be picked over by angry, poor young men whose moral instincts were addled by junk, teen crack. It was the war zone that created a city so cheap that musicians with hardly any paying gigs could get by on odd jobs, where lofts and decaying bars welcomed the most meagre of audiences. Tom Corsi settled on Chambers Street, a few blocks from World Trade; John Zorn settled in the East Village near Elliott Sharp, Polly Bradfield, Anthony Coleman and Zeena Parkins. The concentration of activity, of people, of places to play, generated so much heat that a fusion reaction took place. No Wave, free jazz and non-diatonic improv merged into the unstable element we call... what else? Downtown music.

We don't like to admit it, but art is the first step of gentrification, and in small measure – small but symbolically real – those poverty-level creatives are the vanguard for the "employed but hip" who hold the door for the urban professionals. How different the city was

just a few weeks ago, flush with money and pride, its subway cars refitted, too swank now for more artists. Now the ruins are made by angry, well-funded young men whose moral instincts are addled by politics and religion. They hated New York not for its desolation but for its extravagant, brutal wealth. Downtown was never a zip code, but now it's a zip code short.

Small voice of calm

BY DAVID HANDEL

The immediate reaction of New Yorkers to the World Trade Center disaster was evenly uniform, and tacitly understood by everyone. It was as if some rarely called upon evolutionary response had been suddenly triggered in every resident of the city: going on with life as usual somehow felt wrong.

The local music community was, at least briefly, paralysed by the events. On music-related email lists, performers agonised over whether they should go ahead with planned gigs in New York. Quite a few decided not to. Several large music festivals were either postponed, like the annual CMJ Music Marathon; or outright cancelled, like the huge Québec New York 2001, which was to include an eagerly anticipated, week-long *Musique Actuelle* series at Tonic. Some of these cancellations were due to logistical problems, like the temporary suspension of flights, but the primary motivation was a feeling that it would be insensitive to say, present a night of dance music while the number of "missing" increased daily, and hundreds of firefighters and rescuers were dying in the rubble. Some people who were going ahead with planned gigs felt a twinge of guilt: one announcement posted to a music list started, "It's hard to think about pop music these days, but..."

For some artists, cancelling wasn't an option, which was an equally difficult situation. On local radio station WFUM, Programme Director Brian Turner had the thankless job of sitting in for several DJs unable to get to the station in the immediate aftermath of the attack. "I felt generally helpless," he says – WFUM is almost exclusively a music station, with no newsgathering facilities. But he did what he could. "I encouraged people to help to out," he says. "The local police were giving us periodic lists of things they needed, and I passed that along to our listeners. And I played music to soothe nerves: Sandy Denney, Jamaican music, some Kevin Ayers." The station later received dozens of email messages from listeners grateful for the job it had done providing a bit of calm.

As the initial shock wore off, people began organising massive efforts to raise money for charities and gather supplies for the rescue workers at Ground Zero. Many local musicians helped to publicise emergency phone numbers, spread the word about where volunteers were needed, and set up benefit gigs. Electronic musician O.Blast, for example, used his email list (usually used to post monthly calendars of electronic music gigs in New York) to disseminate posters packed with information sent to her by performers and rescue agencies around town. Benefit shows were organised with incredible speed: at a five-day Red Cross benefit at Tonic that ultimately raised \$18,000, a beaming John Zorn announced, "This series was only an idea four days ago." Even previously scheduled concerts became benefits, or at least opportunities to help. At a Birdsong of The Mesozoic gig, the group solicited donations for the victims of the attack and their families; at pass-the-hat folk club the Living Room, singer Marc Farrow announced that he was donating all proceeds to the families of missing firefighters, and raised an amazing \$25.

Sadly, within a week of the tragedy the focus had shifted slightly, from concern for the dead and their families to worries over the threat of a new war. Not

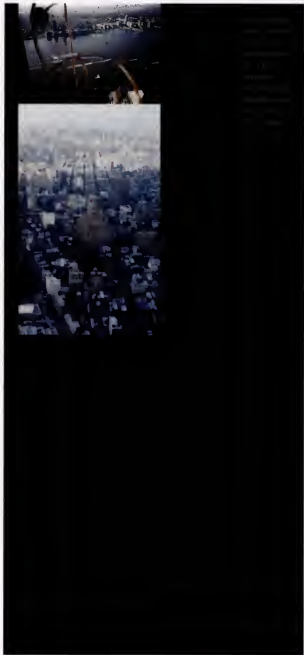


PHOTO: STEPHEN WITTELL/TOPI, JONAHAN MACATELLO

that the victims of the attack have been forgotten; however, recent Trade Center-related postings on music lists and flyers handed out at gigs have been about anti-war rallies and petitions to Washington as often as they've been about Red Cross fundraisers. More than anything, after seeing the aftermath of the attack, people here want to make sure nothing like it ever happens to anyone else.

Ready for the clampdown

BY JON HIBBY

Oddly enough, I bought September's *Wine* at a newsstand in the World Trade Center. I was excited to find it there, as none of the usual record store outlets had it yet, and I looked forward to being able to pick it up so conveniently in the future. For me, the WTC was a frequent travel stop between Manhattan and my apartment just across the river in Jersey City. I can't count the times I walked there on my way home, after a late show at Tonic or the Knitting Factory, always keeping the buildings in sight. I'll also never forget the collective gasp that went up from my crowded street as the second tower collapsed.

What worries me most are the added difficulties which foreign musicians will now face getting in and out of the country. The US government already makes it almost impossible to obtain a work visa for experimental musicians, requiring them to apply a year in advance when shows are never actually arranged with that much lead time. Thus, most musicians are forced to sneak into the country posing as tourists, which takes up much of their valuable time arranging and planning (not bringing their instruments, mailing CDs ahead, etc.). This situation was drastic enough before 11 September, and seems bound to get worse now, with more musicians even being turned back at the borders. This doesn't bode well for the long-term artistic health of the city, especially since NYC's musical scenes are already fairly stagnant, with the vast majority of stellar shows coming from touring, out of town musicians. Right now, the fallout here is obvious everywhere you go: extra police and security everywhere; mourning congregations outside every fire station; the topic of every overheard conversation. The arts will regroup and take stock of this new world once things have calmed down a little.

At least the tragedy reminded us what an exceptionally stratified city New York is. Despite living in this area my entire life, no one closer to me than the cousin of an ex-girlfriend and a childhood acquaintance were among the casualties. This also appears to be the case for my friends, both in the worlds of music and my former journalistic career.

On a more personal note, the record label which I run from my apartment, *Erstwhile*, has been largely unaffected. My next two releases are on track to come out in November as scheduled. I was unable to summon the concentration level needed to finalize the masters in the wake of 9/11, confronted by the absence of the WTC every time I left my apartment. In another strange coincidence, one of these releases is called *Right After*, a title selected in August. I'm trying to go about business as best I can, as I write I'm on a plane to Germany for various *Erstwhile*-related events. All you can do in the face of tragedy is try to persevere. Otherwise, you've lost another battle.

It's only castles burning

BY ALAN LIGHT

Walking by an outdoor parking garage on Essex Street last summer, I was amazed by the sound of a car being lifted mechanically to its space three or so storeys up. An incredible grinding noise. Combined with a passing NYC police siren, I decided I had heard the best noise show of the year. I've always had a

serious aesthetic appreciation for the city sounds around me, and that's what has led me to music like Kenakis, Bortolomaeus, AMM, Merzbow, NYC's own No Wave and 80s noise scenes, even My Bloody Valentine. In the wake of the tragedy on 11 September, I'm not sure how much of this music I ever need to hear again. Just as the attack itself has eclipsed every other disaster in my lifetime, the implied sound (I didn't hear it first hand) of jets colliding into the towers and their subsequent collapse seems to outdistance every musical cataclysm I've been acquainted with. As a teenager I was very taken with Penderick's *Therapy For The Victims Of Hiroshima*, one of the most bracing classical compositions produced in the 20th century; but that was 40 years after the bombs dropped, and half a world away. Would I want to hear a therapy for the victims of the World Trade Center? Not right now. Not that it would be wrong or a disservice in any way, but it's too soon and too close (Penderick wrote the piece in 1950). By the same token, I'm sure the endless releases of "God Bless America" and other patriotic chestnuts helped console some of my fellow citizens, but for me they were antiquated and reactionary, conjuring an alarming vision of regressing to the Pearl Harbor/Two Jims/I'm/In Berlin world that existed before the Twin Towers were built. Would these songs have sounded cool before 9/11 to the same people who found solace in them?

One song moved me to a benefit concert at Tonic on 15 September: Neil Young's "Don't Let It Bring You Down," performed by Marc Anthony Thompson, Marc Rober, Yuha Honda, Douglass Browne and others. When Thompson sang "and the buildings scrape the sky" in the first verse I almost found a too topical, but as they moved into the chorus ("don't let it bring you down," it's only castles burning/Just find someone who's turning/And you will come around"), my ambivalence over whether the song hit too close to home somehow connected with the overall mass confusion about an appropriate way to deal with the tragedy, and made for a transcendent moment. Still, I didn't pull out my copy of *After The Gold Rush* for a couple of days afterwards to hear the original again, although I wanted to; I couldn't stand the idea of having a theme song for the ordeal.

Welcome to the terrordrome

BY SION REYNOLDS

Where 9/11 might have a specific dampening effect, at least temporarily, is on music based on the aesthetics of devastation: extreme noise terror, aural explosions, apocalyptic soundscapes, trauma. From DJ Scud's "Total Destruction" and Techno Animal's *Brotherhood Of The Bomb* to Death Metal, the whole idea of 'sonic assault' starts to seem superfluous, its best efforts suppressed by reality. Right now, it's hard to remember why it was supposed to be a good thing to do in the first place.

The alba, I suppose, is that it's not about vicious delight in wanton catatony (cf small boys who love blowing stuff up, Hollywood disaster movies), but about waking people from cultural slumber, confronting them with the worst that can happen. In times of numbness, estate emergency gets those atrophied adrenal glands pumping again. But when everyday life is more than sufficiently ravaged, thank you very much, who wants Armageddon for entertainment? Music that soothes, or helps the tears flow, seems more helpful — being on the Harold Budd and Fairport Convention.

Atrocity has always been around, of course — genocidal massacres, massive bombing campaigns, collateral death tolls cumulatively vaster than 9/11. If not as spectacular. But as the cliché goes, it makes a real difference when it's close to home. Literally, in my case: I live about one and a half miles from the site.

Even now, almost a month later, the air is sometimes acid with the wind-borne fumes from what is effectively a gigantic, slow burning crematorium. 9/11 has fatally interfered with my sonic 'appetite for destruction'. Even music based around 'ambient fear' like Tinky's "Aftermath" (one of my favourite pieces of music ever) might be a tough listen in the future — the lines about going "looking for people" have a new creepy resonance, just as I doubt I'll ever be able to fully share my two year old's delight as he ports up at an aeroplane glistering in the wondrously blue skies over Manhattan.

Some of the more daring commentators have broadened the whole question of the cartographic sublime, writing candidly about the appalling splendour of blazing fuselages piercing sundazed glass, towers crumpling in on themselves. Even Stockhausen, who caused such a furor with his dotty, tasteless remarks about the WTC attack as "the greatest work of art that is possible in the cosmos", was clumsily touching on something worth addressing: the extent to which apocalypse and annihilation are embedded in the 'libidinal economy' of the avant garde, from Hendrix's aural pyromania and Einstürzende Neubauten's end-of-civilisation schtick to the phoenix rising scenarios that obsess Cannibal Ox (whose producer ELP might want to rethink the title of his forthcoming solo album, *Fantastic Damage*).

For a certain kind of extremist art, imagery of utter waste and total war serve as figures for absolute desire, mindblowing excess, too-muchness. It's the 20th century sublime, remade (where the 19th century sublime was about remaking Nature), but just as anti-urbanism and inhuman. Underground dance music from drum 'n' bass to Gabba is full of this kind of war-gaming imagery. And dancehall ragga has been dominated for the last few years by the trope of fire, a conflation of gangetta jungle with the cleansing flames of Jah's righteous wrath: a Babylon-shall-fall Fantasy of infernal getting their just desserts which appeals in post-colonial vassal state Jamaica for precisely the same anti-globalisation, anti-US reasons it does for Islamic fundamentalists.

The events of the last few weeks have made me question my own pleasure in this kind of imagery. I've also had pause to consider the way a rhetoric of crusades and a messianic, rallying mode of address has tipped off my critical tongue at various points over the years — paralleled by the way underground musics from Gabba to Jungle to HipHop often envision themselves in paramilitary terms, as guerrillas, heroic renegades, armies of underground resistance, even terrorists. Then again, as silly as it seems when the all too real thing flares up all around us, maybe 'culture' is the most harmless place for this kind of soldier talk. Music and the discourse around it can subliminally desire for mission, insurgency, armageddon, the hunger for belief and the absolute. Indeed, music is one of the few areas in which the refusal to compromise may still be laudable.

Vinyl requiem

HARVIE BOON

A few random recollections. One of my teachers here began her first post-9/11 class by ringing a bell. Another began by invoking the memory of a street musician heard on the way to school that day, belting out a tune on an old organ. At the strange shrines that sprang up spontaneously all over lower Manhattan in the days afterwards, there were the predictable post-Lennon folk singers, but also samba groups, Tibetan chants, jazz. This was music functioning as social connective tissue, dressing for a collective wound. It helped.

For myself, most of my records and CDs sit in the exact same place they were on the night of 9/11. Done

symptom of trauma is a visceral distaste for everything that one was doing at the moment of shock. I'm sensitive to sounds, although, since I watched the disaster from my roof in Williamsburg, far enough away to see events unfold without hearing the sound, perhaps my ears are in better shape than my eyes. When I see an aircraft, I have doubts as to what it is that I am seeing: a vehicle or a bomb. For the first weeks after 9/11, the only music I was able to listen to was Indian ragas which, with their sustained focus on a particular emotional mood, slowly penetrate consciousness until everything else falls away. To my surprise, in the last week or so, I've found myself listening repeatedly to the quasi Cold War music of my youth: Bowie's *Low*, early Pere Ubu. This Heat — avant rock from the late 70s that was both parastic on, and sought to transform, the prevailing culture of political polarisation. Music that worked with fear, that looked for lines of flight.

Change before change affects us

BY KEIZ FERNHOO

Nothing written or said could ever quite accommodate the weight of the shocking events of 11 September, which defy all reason. These dark times have already assumed their appropriate place in the annals of history alongside other unimaginable atrocities, like the Holocaust and the atomic bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. We may never be able to make sense of the madness, but all conspiracy and prophecy and punditry aside, I do believe that this immense cloud of evil may yet yield the sun. After all, we have taken the plunge into the murky waters of the unknown before, and we're still here (and still learning the hard way). With war and terror and global economic depression staring us in the face, once again there comes a mandate for change across the board that reverberates from an individual to a national to a human level. Quite simply, we must effect change before change affects us.

While some may question the relevance of music and film and art to all of this, as someone who lives by and lives for these forms of expression, I would say that they are important because they reveal who we really are. Without knowledge of self we are unable to know and to relate to the world and the universe around us. Ask the Mayans or the ancient Egyptians how important art was to their daily spiritual lives (all you have to do is bear witness to the pyramids of Yucatan and Giza, which draw your attention upwards to the sky). Despite what the world may think of America and the West, not all of us are about *Beavis & Butt-head* or *The Backstreet Boys*. Though we prize free expression, with freedom comes great responsibility. We can never forget that when we pander to the lowest common denominator, we are cheating ourselves out of the higher heights that are our birthright.

It was The Last Poets, speaking in different turbulent times, who declared that "Art is warfare", a statement made all the more appropriate with the declaration of a new kind of unconventional war. Bombs and weapons and even ideology will not win this war, but only a change in the very ways in which we think and feel, and in the art we make to express this new outlook. Now is the time for knowledge, wisdom, understanding and strength to prevail. We might want to dope ourselves with gratuitous entertainment and escape into fantasy because it is easy, but in the long run we know the uselessness and frivolity of such a course of action. Personally, I cannot imagine watching another vacuous MTV award show or listening to another record that does not give me something positive to take with me in my daily life. And I know I'm not alone. I know that people in general are a lot smarter than they are given credit for, and when presented with the impetus for change, they will change for the better. □

A CLUTCH OF SOUTHERN FRIED ROCK SONGS, PLUS AN ALBUM OF
MELANCHOLY ELECTRONICA: JUST ANOTHER MONTH IN THE HECTIC
LIFE OF JIM O'ROURKE, EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC'S HARDEST
WORKING CATALYST, IMPROVISOR, PRODUCER, POWERBOP WHIZ
AND SONIC YOUTH'S HENEST WILD CARD

by Dave Karger | Photo: Patrick J. McLaughlin

the man who fell to earth



"Of course, by the time I hit high school I was a minimalist freak," Jim O'Rourke deadpans. "A total freak. Seriously, it was a really heavy deal. I was insane. *Discreet Music* had just blown the whole thing open. I knew Brian Eno from Roky Music and when I picked up that record his liner notes just put a whole lot of things in perspective. That and Michael Nyman's *Experimental Music* book were huge for me. It was like I finally understood the process, why these people were doing these things, just the aesthetic right in front of you in clear language. I was a Steve Reich freak too. My friend and I would go to the school orchestra room that was next door in the Catholic girls' school and just sit at the two pianos and do this phase thing for an hour." He summons a guttural drilling noise from his throat and starts to drum the air with his hands. "The teacher would just let us do it. We thought he was into it, but it turns out he only let us do it because it kept all the girls away."

All this at an age when many of us were still feeling pretty pleased to have mastered full bladder control. But this is also the guy who claims he went from Paul McCartney's first solo album (purchased at the age of six) to Derek Bailey's *Lot 74* by a process of "creative cross-referencing" at his local library before he'd even got to high school. This early mis-education, this obsessive attempt to join disparate dots across the face of the map, has defined O'Rourke's subsequent musical career of building, burning and reconstructing bridges between such previously exclusive genres as free improvisation, tape music, glitch electronics, acoustic folk and all-out rifferama. Between his solo work, his producing and engineering jobs, and playing in such diverse groups as Gastr Del Sol, Company, The Red Krayolas, Illusion Of Safety, Fern O'Berg and most recently, Sonic Youth, O'Rourke has plotted one of the most endearingly confusing routes across the face of modern music. Indeed, he's releasing two records this month, *Insignificance* (Drag City in the US and Domino here), and *I'm Happy*, and *I'm Singing*, And A 1, 2, 3, 4 (Mego), that beautifully illustrate the two poles of his career. While *I'm Happy*... sees O'Rourke drawing extended circular patterns from nothing but a Powerbook, *Insignificance* works in almost hilarious contrast: a Southern fried rock album that reverberates with the redneck rebel rousing of the likes of Lynyrd Skynyrd or Danny Whitten-era Crazy Horse.

"Everybody keeps saying it sounds so Southern," O'Rourke bursts out, from the decidedly un-ranchlike surroundings of an East London townhouse where we meet during his UK promotional visit. "I didn't intend that, but I guess it's a part of it. I mean I've never really listened to Skynyrd but I guess you can't avoid them. The first song, 'All Downhill From Here', was actually written on acoustic guitar, but when I finally recorded it I had been playing electric for a year, I'd

been on tour and that's all I was playing, so I think that's a real factor. Playing the songs acoustically implies playing them a certain way and with certain arrangements. I purposefully stayed away from that. This is actually the second version of the record. I made a first attempt but when I heard it back I just thought, ugh, this is crap. Just like Eureka 2.5 or something. It was much more pop and super-arranged and I didn't want to do that. I just trashed it all.

"The current version was written, recorded and mixed in three weeks. I did it really quick. I was like, can't I just sit down and write songs, learn 'em and play 'em as a band? I didn't want to make another 'built in the studio' record. It's not like I never will again - just not now. It was also a question of practicalities. I don't really live anywhere so I wanted to see if I could just hit it and do it. It's just about songwriting, nothing more."

Still, insignificance sounds pretty coherent after records such as 1997's *Bad Timing* (the first of an intermittent series titled after Nicolas Roeg's movies), *Funny Days*, 99's *Eureka* and its sister EP *Halfway To A Three-way*, all of which saw O'Rourke re-investigating American roots music under the benign spell of mainwinks like the late guitarist John Fahey, modern minimalist Tony Conrad and Americana composer Charles Ives. O'Rourke's music similarly speaks of epic American space, of accumulative power, looking like the ever-approaching horizon. It often feels continental in scope, as though dictated by the contours of the landmass and the huge arcing skies.

"Oh yeah, my music would have to reflect that," O'Rourke agrees. "After all, I am an American, but the particular thing with me is that I've always been slightly outside of America looking in. Both my parents were Irish, so I didn't have an 'American' house when I was growing up. I would buy *The Dandy* and *The Boon*. We'd go to the Inish shop on Sunday after Mass and I didn't get Superman comics, I got *Dennis The Menace*. It wasn't a superheavy UK house but I knew a lot more about UK culture than other kids at school. There were American things too, but it was very like an English script with an American set."

Growing up in Chicago, near O'Hare Airport, in the 70s, he encountered Fahey's music early on. "A lot of what's important to me in Fahey's music is the space," he asserts. "The resonance. What he was playing had as much to do with the sound as the rhythm and the notes. Someone like Leo Kottke, well, it's musician music. No insult, but as I got older I got less interested in being a musician. When I was a kid I really got into Zappa and it took me a while to realise what was actually wrong with him. I worked out that I'm not into stuff that's about musicianship. I'm interested in all of it and Fahey is about all of it. It's not good versus bad; it's just not for me."

Bad Timing marked a turning point for O'Rourke. For the first time he seemed to be shaking the conceptual shackles that had bound him to experimental projects like Brise-Glace and Gastr Del Sol, both of which were blatant exercises in genre. Around about the same time O'Rourke had become a personal friend of John Fahey, and for a while it was almost as if they had morphed into each other. Suddenly O'Rourke was picking some gorgeously buzzing acoustic guitar while Fahey himself was busy slicing swathes of proto-industrial noise from his electric six-string - most convincingly on *Wormhole*, which O'Rourke produced. Or so it seemed.

"Well, *Bad Timing* actually happened before I knew Fahey," O'Rourke points out. "That stuff was two years old by the time it came out. I was doing a tour with Cindy O'Call and the guy who was booking the tour wanted me to do a set, and so I wrote all that stuff then. I actually started all that fingerpicking stuff after hearing 'Horizons' by Genesis; it's on *Fordist*, this classical guitar piece. That's where I learned to fingerpick from, more from Genesis than Fahey. I was playing that way for two years in Chicago. I would do a lot of guitar stuff around town, complete phrases that I'd never end up documenting. Also, I'd already recorded Fahey's 'Ory Bones In The Valley' on Gastr Del Sol's *Upgrade & Afterlife* before I even met him, and Tony Conrad had played on it, in fact I sent Fahey a tape of it."

He adopts a mock Fahey whine. "He was like, 'Oh, it's better than mine!' Yeah, whatever. He was very nice about it. Then we did some shows in California and it went from there. He certainly had a big impact on me but not as big as it's been blown up to."

"The thing I find funny with kids in the States is that with the Internet it's so easy to find information. You get these 20-year old kids bitching, 'Oh, there's O'Rourke with his Fahey thing'. I just feel like screaming! You didn't even know who Fahey was two years ago, asshole! There's so much of that. I'm so tired of it. Kids in the States hate me, they turn on you so fast. It's frustrating. Still, Fahey's music was important to me, like Tony Conrad or Loren Mazzacane, there was something about America there. Charles Ives even more so. He was huge with me. I was lucky to get into him early on, when I was eight or nine. My library's classical section was fucking amazing. The first thing I heard by him was *The Unanswered Question*. I'd just come from Beethoven's Ninth and it fucking blew my mind! His *Central Park In The Dark* is such a fundamental part of my musical personality, it's so ingrained I don't even know it anymore." You can hear echoes of Ives's brass bands, which he would record to give the feeling of a parade passing in and out of earshot, in the way O'Rourke staggers the instrumentation on *Bad Timing*, with

brass parts marching exuberantly into view from offscreen. "I remember the trumpet player at the time was like, 'This is stupid!'" O'Rourke laughs. "I was like, 'I know.' What's funny is this was a guy who was into Henry Cow and Todd Rundgren, who positively prided himself on his wacky credentials, yet to him I was just too stupid."

Jim O'Rourke can often come across as wilfully wayward. His whole career has curved ass-backwards, moving from his early tape and tabletop guitar experiments through songwriting and joining a rock group. "The career that you see is just what I've decided to make public," he explains. "From an early age I was always playing the guitar, I just never thought I had anything to say as me with that stuff. I think one of the biggest turning points was doing the Brise-Glace record, which has kinda got forgotten because you can't even get it anymore."

Alongside O'Rourke, the short-lived Brise-Glace featured bassist Dann Gray (who has enjoyed a higher profile of late, after some great duo records with guitarist Len Mazzacane), drummer Thymme Jones, and guitarist Oylan Posa, plus guest players like Henry Kaiser and O'Rourke's Gastr Del Sol partner David Grubbs. Their 1994 album *When In Nulitas* (engineered by Steve Albini for Skin Graft) was a collection of freely drifting instrumentals tied up with some neat concept baggage. "I was afraid," O'Rourke confesses. "I still didn't think I had anything to say that was worthwhile enough to bother people with. So the way I approached the Brise-Glace record was that it was a tape piece, but instead of car doors slamming I decided to put these four people together, just to see how they worked and almost make a documentary about that, like a tape piece. It was like something I could hide behind a bit, a concept to divert attention from me. I still didn't feel comfortable with having a band, but I did feel comfortable with presenting a band that wasn't a band."

Brise-Glace was originally intended as a songwriting vehicle for O'Rourke and David Grubbs, but once it became apparent that Grubbs wasn't right for it, the duo formed Gastr Del Sol. Gastr were a challenging proposition, especially in their earliest incarnation. Primarily interested in using context to provoke differing reactions, O'Rourke treated Gastr as a Trojan horse, almost, smuggling uncomfortably angular avant shapes into an indie rock record. "Still I think I discovered my confidence during Gastr," he nods. "But I wasn't really allowed to expand on it. It took a while for me to decide to get out of that situation. I knew I wanted out because it was getting very restricting and condescending, but I was always a very timid person, especially back then. I just couldn't do it. It was a weird mindfuck situation and finally it just exploded

and I was like, the hell with all this. I'm just gonna do it. That's what Eureka was all about, just being fed up hiding behind something. I started to feel OK enough to do it on my own. I mean, at the end of Gastr I was doing it on my own. I don't mean Grubbs wasn't contributing, but it was just really divided by that point. It also became frustrating playing in things like The Red Krayola, where you'd work your ass off and then wonder, why? It's like: I should just be doing this by myself, why am I waiting to do it with other people?"

He was also growing tired of a certain style of improvising. "The whole Gastr thing, that way of guitar playing, you know – woosh, ping, ding – that was how I came out of the Derek Bailey thing because I liked referencing harmony a lot. To me dissonance was most interesting when it was battling with harmony. Also, I didn't like the lifestyle of improvising. There's a whole lifestyle there and I simply wasn't interested. I didn't like listening to a constant stream of brining and moaning and politics. I hate being involved in it. I had real idealistic ideas about improv. I'm sure this sort of stuff goes on everywhere, but when someone is a vicious careerist in rock music it's not really that surprising. I grew up with this ideal image of improvisors so it was a little more shocking to me, I never thought of it as a way of making money... but, uh, I'm not going to get in trouble over this again."

He trails off, remembering the storm that blew up over his comments about European improvisors in an interview in *The Wire* 165. "It was just a tale of being 20 years old and going over to Europe and realising that the world of improv in Europe was so different than in America," he protests. "I mean John Zorn wasn't playing moneyed gigs in the States then, there's never been a culture of that in the States, so I didn't believe you should make money from it because I didn't come from that culture. I thought you got a cup of coffee and maybe \$20. It's always been like that. There's more support now than ever but even so, it's something you do at the coffee shop or if you're lucky you do it at Tonic. That's bedtime for an improv gig."

O'Rourke's roots reach deep into the UK's improv scene. He had been corresponding with Derek Bailey from the age of 17, and with his Irish parents regularly crossing the Atlantic, he had plans to take the trip over to London and head down to Bailey's East London Incus HQ. On his first visit, the young O'Rourke blew most of his savings on rare Stockhausen vinyl at Harold Moore's in Soho before making the journey out to Bailey's house. "I went to Derek's to buy as much Incus stuff as I could," O'Rourke grins. "He had me over and he just blew me away. I always remember that his refrigerator was broken, it was buzzing away and Derek wanted to see if I could fix it. But I was like, oh no, I like the buzz! I bought as much stuff from him as I could afford. He was nice and when he was

coming to Chicago he would write me and tell me he was coming over." They began playing together, with O'Rourke on tabletop guitar. Two years later, Bailey invited O'Rourke – then aged 20 – to play in the Company ensemble. He's maintained the connection to this day: Last year Incus released *Xylophonus* Vrtuosos, O'Rourke's album with free saxophonist Mats Gustafsson. At the same time he was in touch with AMM's Eddie Prevost, with whom he went on to make *Third Straight Day Made Public* (1994).

Parallel to all of this activity, O'Rourke has been forging an alternative route through the Xeroxed world of the post-Industrial noise tape underground. "Oh yeah!" he shouts, punching the air. "That scene was my whole world for many years. There was so much good stuff happening back then and not many people are even aware of it, it's been so under-documented but it was huge. I started out on that scene, putting out some cassettes, mostly prepared guitar stuff and tape music. I also had a group, which I'll never tell you the name of, it was terrible. This was at the end of high school: 17, 18 onwards, 1985 or 86. A lot of stuff came out of that. It's how I first got to know of Masam Akita's *Merzbow* stuff. I couldn't get a copy of his first LP, *Material Action 2*, when it came out but I picked up all his tapes on ZSF. We were all fanously writing back and forth, getting letters from people like *Controlled Bleeding*, *Illusion Of Safety* and *KK Null*."

Japanese guitarist and vocalist Kazuyuki Kull was particularly involved with O'Rourke. Besides Null's resolutely stoic role in comicbook power trio Zeri Geva, he was a key early collaborator with Merzbow, with whom he released many cassettes and LPs of genuinely stirring beauty. O'Rourke cut some sides with Null too, notably *New Kind Of Water* on Chamel House. He even expanded Brise-Glace to take in Null's guitar and vocals, renaming the group Yona-Kit. Their self-titled CD, now deleted, was a thoroughly entertaining disaster. "Yona-Kit was a weird one-off," O'Rourke blushes, rolling his eyes. "It started off as a cassette thing where he wanted to do a Prog rock group and we thought it sounded cool. Null said he wanted it to be very different from Zeri Geva. Then he sent us a tape and it was just these riffs as usual. He never said he was actually gonna sing on it and here he was, screaming stuff like 'Raping an angel' and we were like, uh-oh. I don't like being on a record where you're being kind of a moron about stuff like rape. He thought it was really shocking. Maybe if you haven't left the house for 30 years. Those songs are actually fucking bizarre though, it sounds cohesive because there are all these driving rhythms, but it's weird if you listen to it. Still, it's not a great recording. Steve Albini is a beautiful engineer but I was scared of him at the time so I didn't mix it, but I should have.

"I AM AN AMERICAN, BUT I'VE ALWAYS BEEN SLIGHTLY OUTSIDE OF AMERICA LOOKING IN. I DIDN'T GET SUPERMAN COMICS, I GOT DENNIS THE MENACE"



"The whole tape scene came along at just the right time for me," he continues. "I was starting to get suspicious of avant garde music and suddenly I found all these people doing this other stuff. At first I was like, this is the same thing only they're not uptight! But eventually the problem I developed was that once these guys got the sound they're after, they're satisfied with it. I always felt that once you've got the sound you should do stuff with it. That's how I started to lose interest. My aesthetic at the time was coming through in my prepared guitar stuff. I was obsessed with never using a sound that sounded like a guitar, with never using anything that betrayed my source. Years down the road I finally heard Kevin Drumm and I was like, OK, he did it, I can stop now."

Via his connections with AMM, O'Rourke also hooked up with reclusive experimental musician David Jackman and started contributing to Organum, Jackman's elemental improv orchestra. "When I arrived back in Britain I had this piece I'd been working on as part of a school project," O'Rourke recalls. "Jackman heard it and wanted to put it out as a 12" single on Christoph Heermann's Dom label. That never happened but then David started asking me to do stuff with Organum. It got to the point where he wanted me to mix them and then to the point that he'd have the idea and want me to execute it. He just trusted me to do it. I may be on one or two of the CDs and a whole handful of the vinyl, I can never remember what I'm on."

O'Rourke has become so ubiquitous that he's constantly surprised to hear himself turning up on records he had no idea he contributed to: everything from Björk's Post, courtesy of a sampled loop that featured him and Robin Rimbaud, through Nurse With Wound's *An Awkward Pause*, where he plays accordion on a tape manipulated by Christoph Heermann. He crops up again with Heermann on Hirsch's Nicht Aus Sofa's two most recent CDs, and on the "supergroup" Mimic alongside Andreas Martin and Edward Ka-Spel. It was Heermann who introduced him to Cologne's nascent A-Musik scene.

"Christoph knew [A-Musik's] Frank Dormmet because HNAs had done a split single with him, and Comment put out my first full LP, *The Ground Below Our Heads*, in 91 on his EntenteFutur label. A-Musik was just starting at that point, and I was up there all the time. It was a very heavy time. We'd all get together and sit up all night spinning Nuno Canavero's Flux Quba record [a cut Portuguese proto-electronica record, since reissued on O'Rourke's Mokai label], Land Free, Agitation Free. At this point there was a lot of interesting electronics stuff happening. I met Christian Fennesz in 1990, at a festival in Vienna where I was playing with Ilusion Of Safety, and at that point he'd just stopped playing rock music and the Megalo label had just started up. Pita,

Peter Rehberg, came up to me and gave me all the records that had come out on Megalo, but it took me a while to get to listen to them. I think I might have got instrument, Fennesz's first record. The guy who ran the festival asked if Pita and Christian and I would play in the bar afterwards, and I was amazed when I saw the stuff they were using. I didn't know that Powerbooks were strong enough to run all this music software. Most people were just using sequencers and stuff but I was amazed at this. Pita had such great software. I knew I had to get a Powerbook but it took me quite a while to save up for one."

In the meantime, Fennesz, Pita and O'Rourke struck up an inspirational working relationship and hit the road, eventually releasing the results as *The Magic Sound Of Fenn O'Beeg*, a record that O'Rourke describes as sounding like "falling down the stairs". "For the first tour I was playing a pretty cheap computer, so all I could run were sound effects," he says. "You can open up sound files and play them and that's all, basically. I had windows open and all I could do was start, stop and play, but I was like, OK, this is all I have, let's see if I can actually work with it. Christian was the hotshot because he had the Powerbook 1400. I love playing with those guys, it's like a vacation where you get to hang out with friends and make a bunch of racket. In the last year or so it's got especially great. Improv-wise, it's different. While it is improvised and we're definitely listening to each other, the way we're relating is not the way you would relate if you had traditional instruments. The recent shows have been killer and the next album is definitely the best yet."

Yet O'Rourke doesn't see the Powerbook's imputed 'democratisation of music making' as inherently good news. Indeed, the ever-increasing proliferation of faceless, soulless-like glitch makes him despair. "The stupid doing stuff with the Powerbook for now," he maintains. "Once I had selected tracks for this new [Megalo] record, even though none of it was new, I was like, OK, done with that, now I need to find a different approach. Powerbook shows were cool early on but the problem is it's so easy. It's easy to make it sound like all the other stuff, and you can just burn your own CD and get it released within a month. A lot of people aren't waiting to 'find themselves' in it. I mean you can tell when it's a Pita thing or a Bernhard Günter thing, but you've got this glut of stuff with people just doing variants on them. It creates this environment for people who are just getting into it where they can't tell the difference. People say it all sounds the same and that's because a lot of it does. They may not know that there are people doing really great stuff in there, but it's understandable when people who are new to it start to wade through it and just go, 'Oh, forget it,' instead of saying, 'There's a lot of crap out there but

there's also some really interesting stuff.' I got like that with noise; like, enough! That's the problem when there's this glut, when it's so easy. It also means that people don't develop the music enough and I'm really self-conscious about that. I sit on things for so long, I want to make sure it's worthwhile, I'll sit on it for years. I don't think the new record sounds like all of that stuff. I wanted to make sure it was what I wanted to do with a computer."

He needn't have worried. The fantastically named *I'm Happy, And I'm Singing, And A 1, 2, 3, 4* sounds quite unlike anything coming from O'Rourke's Powerbook peers. He handles his source material with a real musical sense, building evocative structures from overlapping circles of snatched samples. The disc is made up of three live performances. The first, taken from a performance at New York's Tonic, grows from a brief four second recording of O'Rourke playing the accordion into a multi-layered snowball of buzz that expands on his recent drone work with the minimalist composer Phil Niblock (O'Rourke's hardy-guying playing was sampled by Niblock on his recent *Touch CO, Touch Works*). But it's the final, 21 minute track that really stands out: an extended melancholy string work that brings to mind such bizarre associations as the *Fantasia Suites* of 17th century English composer William Lawes. "I used a short snippet of a string quartet for that piece," O'Rourke explains. "It was into stuff that we had to write at school. I was really into taking a piece of music and multiplying the violin part by four, the viola by three, the rhythm by two and just keeping repeating it. They wouldn't ever superimpose, and if you picked good original source material you knew what you would get. That piece was almost like that. I'd written a program to do exactly that, so you have all these elements stretching, and the live component was transforming the sounds and moving them into each other."

"I have to admit, though, that I got to the point where I didn't want to do the Megalo record at all because I knew people would say, 'Oh, O'Rourke's jumping on the Powerbook bandwagon'. I know that stuff shouldn't bother me but it does. I mean you could write on the front of the record that this material is five years old and people still wouldn't notice it. It's not important but it is really frustrating. Everyone is getting dumber and dumber. Like when people say to me, 'Oh, you make so many records', and I'll say that I haven't put out a record in two years, and they'll be like, 'What about that new Smog record?' I engineered it; it's not my record! For some reason, with all this massive amount of information that's being thrown about, people can't distinguish what's what any more."

Yet there's no doubt that O'Rourke's strong musical personality ensures he leaves his fingerprint on every production he works on, from Faust's ill-fated *Alien LP*

"THERE WAS AN EARTHQUAKE, WHICH WAS THE BUILDING FALLING. I THOUGHT WE WERE BEING BOHBED, EVERYTHING WAS TURNING WHITE. ONE OF THE PLANE ENGINES LANDED 50 YARDS FROM ME"



to albums by Stereolab and Melt Banana. "But it's not mine," he protests. "Hopefully I do a good job. Of course you leave a fingerprint. Everyone has certain mics they use, but I do it in service of the record. If [Smog's] Bill Callahan didn't want something, I wouldn't push it. I don't like imposing, although there have been situations where I've got so excited I've been like, 'I gotta do it!' But anyone who knows me, and I pretty much only work with people who know me, knows what I'm like when I get overexcited. You don't take it too seriously." I ask him what records have been the most rewarding to work on and he comes back without a pause. "The Smog records were definitely the most rewarding for me, Bill Callahan is just great, just to sit him in front of a mic and hear him sing the stuff absolutely perfectly first time. The thing about those two records is that Knock, Knock [1999] and Red Apple Falls [1997] sound distinctly different to me from any other Smog records. I mean, I think Bill is strong enough as a singer and performer that if they just stuck a mic in front of him and released the results, I'd go buy it, but I happened to be really lucky in that I worked on two records where he wanted to work with the studio more, with a bit more of an expensive sound. It was an honour and a pleasure."

Despite being homeless at the moment, O'Rourke is theoretically based in New York, mostly crashing with his Sonic Youth colleagues Kim and Thurston. Positively basking at the idea of going back to Chicago, he intends to get a place in NYC as soon as he can. "If I never had to go back to Chicago again I'd be happy," he sighs. "I hate it there. It's so boring, the city closes at 10pm and I think it's dead musically. You tell me what's been good recently?" I toss him Rob Mazurek's Chicago Underground projects. "Oh yeah, I was about to say Rob Mazurek's stuff, but what else? Kevin Drumm, Bobby Conn... I have a lot of respect for Ken Vandermark. He's a really good guy but it's all overblown, what's happening in Chicago. I mean, who there knows about folk music? Nobody. For a city that's supposedly the top improv and electronic music centre in the States, it all just seems so half-assed. Not to be mean, but people in Chicago, the musicians, most of them aren't even music fans. They all listen to the same five records; it's like some club where they rotate the same discs. I can't relate to musicians who don't like music. People I know in New York know all the stuff that people in Chicago know, but they also know, like, the whole English folk thing, from the 60s to now. There's an enthusiasm. If you grow up in Chicago you get pummeled with this myth that New Yorkers are mean and cruel, but I don't find that at all — and I've been living there long enough to know. I can go out on the street at two in the morning and it's

alive, I feel alive there. In Chicago I feel like I just want to hang myself, there's nothing going on, no energy there. I call it the Chicago Disease: people like to sit around bars and bitch. In New York they just don't have time for that."

Another reason for O'Rourke to stay in New York is he's newly acquired status as a member of Sonic Youth. He still can't quite believe it himself. "They won't let me go!" he bursts. "I'm still in this mindset where I'm like, 'Am I supposed to turn up today?' They always say I'm a member, but I don't say it. They seem to like having me around, and I like working with them and that's as far as I consider it. It all started when Thurston and I were doing something with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company and that's how [the recording for] SYR3 happened: we had to swing past the studio and Lee was like, 'Let's jam!' — he's Mr Enthusiasm."

Sonic Youth's tribute to the New Music vanguard, Goodbye 20th Century (SYR4), came together at the suggestion of San Francisco percussionist William Winant, a childhood friend of Kim Gordon's. Given the modest repertoire they were about to tackle, O'Rourke's background in avant garde theory and practice made him the perfect player to round off the team. "The reaction to the Goodbye 20th Century live show was terrible," O'Rourke remembers. "I wanted to kill people. After the London show I promised myself I'd never play here again. Fuck them. These people don't really follow what Sonic Youth are doing and they don't even read the ticket. They were all shouting stuff like 'You used to be my favourite band and now you're shite!' All asking for 'Kool Thing'. They believed in Sonic Youth so many times before, yet they won't believe in them for this. I remember a caption in a review that said 'Goodbye 20th Century, Goodbye Talent'. We pinned it up on the wall of the studio."

"I mean, in many ways it's actually very awkward to fit into the group," O'Rourke continues. "I'm sure to a lot of people it looks like I sneaked in, like I was thinking it was a great opportunity, but they really had to work for a long time to convince me to do it. They really had to push me. It was very challenging at first and it took me a few weeks to feel my way in. Thurston was really excited about me playing synth because he's a big Roy Music fan, and he was like, 'More synth, more synth!' I was like, 'The more synth I play, the stupider it's gonna be'. They were excited about having this new sound — it was the [type of] synth Eno used in *Roxy Music*. The real challenge was when we started writing, because it's the first time I'd worked in a truly democratic group. They all approach writing completely differently to me, so I had to think, 'Right. Lee likes to do this and this is how I interpret that'. I like being in a situation that's new. The sound is a little different. Since [1994's] *Experimental Set Set*,

the songs have been more like interlocking parts rather than verse/chorus; more like a continually fluctuating stream, but the new songs have more definite sections to them. I've really enjoyed playing as a group, but we'd only just started on the new album when the planes hit the World Trade Center."

The 11 September attack on the World Trade Center obviously affected O'Rourke a great deal. He was sleeping in Sonic Youth's studio, just adjacent to Ground Zero, when the first impact hit. As soon as I bring it up I regret it: his mood visibly changes and he starts to speak in a slow monotone drawl. The details are upsettingly grim. "I was lucky," he sighs. "I happened to be outside at the safer moments so I didn't get caught by the massive blast, but it was terrible and I saw a lot of stuff I wish I hadn't seen. I heard the first impact and I was outside for the second one, all you have to do is go outside to the corner to see the towers. Then I was back inside and there was like an earthquake, which was the building falling. But I didn't know that's what it was, I thought we were being bombed, everything was just turning white. One of the plane engines landed about 50 yards from me, right at the corner of Church and Murray. We were finally allowed into the building just this past Sunday, because we were doing a benefit show with Tom Verlaine. We were allowed to go in and get the instruments."

"I have to admit that I'm still at the stage of thinking it's all pointless," O'Rourke confesses. "I haven't done anything since then, the only thing I've done is play the benefit. It always seemed trivial but not as much as it does now. I don't think art is going to become more important after this. Maybe it helps some people because after the benefit a lot of people said they felt better, not necessarily because of what was played but because it was a large group of people who were worried in the same way, you know, because you're on the streets and people are still talking about fucking sports. Even now I'm still remembering details. Every few days I remember something else about it. I have to admit that I don't have enough faith in humanity to think that there's going to be any great change in the American psyche after this, I really don't, there's just too much distraction for people. People in the Western world are physiologically changed because of TV and everything. It's all just distraction. Very few Americans think for themselves. As I'm sure is the case in any country that's run by TV. He shakes his head. "They're going right back to all the same meaningless bullshit as we speak." □ Insignificance is released this month on Domino. I'm Happy, And I'm Singing, And A, 1, 2, 3, 4 will be available soon on Mega. A comprehensive Jim O'Rourke discography is online at: blue.net/orourke

"IF I NEVER HAD TO GO BACK TO CHICAGO AGAIN I'D BE HAPPY.
THE CITY CLOSES AT 10PM AND IT'S DEAD MUSICALLY"

BRADLEY PETERSON / THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE
PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY M. HARRIS



Five years after his death, Russian improviser and experimental musician Sergei Kuryokhin remains the towering figure of Russia's avant garde. His virtuoso piano improvisations were uniquely Russian, as was Pop Mechanics, the unit he formed in 1985 around a shifting line-up of Leningrad's best underground rock musicians. Pop Mechanics were probably perestroika's most exotic fruit: a big band melding clichés from dozens of musical styles – industrial, free jazz, hard rock, opera, contemporary composition, King Crimson, Glenn Branca's massed guitar orchestras – into a sometimes sloppy, sometimes feverishly driving pile-up. A typical stage show would include surrealistically costumed performance artists alongside live goats, pigs, tigers, chicken, dogs, donkeys, monkeys, snakes and ponies. When Pop Mechanics were at their peak playing sports arenas in the late 80s, they sometimes included a folk ensemble, a KGB employees' choir, a classic chamber orchestra and an army truck, all performing simultaneously under Kuryokhin's baton. By then, their ever witty leader was a frequent presence on Soviet TV. Indeed, in May 1991, he pulled off one of his most infamous escapades on a primetime talk show, when he set out to prove, with the aid of diagrams and a real scientist from a research institute, that Lenin was not a human being, but a mushroom.

Along with the famously anti-Soviet punk singer Yegor Letov and a handful of other underground rockers, among them Boris Grebenshikov and Viktor Tsoi, Kuryokhin was a folk hero on a par with Dylan and Lennon for the twentysomething generation that came of age in the 1960s – the decade when the Soviet Union fell apart. In many ways these figures were the true heirs to Russia's dissident poets and novelists, from Pushkin and Tolstoy through to Solzhenitsyn, who are perceived by many Russians as the country's true spiritual leaders.

Given his position as idiot-mystic sage and saint of the Russian underground, you can imagine the seismic shock of Kuryokhin's declaration of allegiance with the extreme right National Bolshevik Party, then on the ascendant in the chaos of post-Soviet Russia. The act divided former colleagues, fans and commentators between those who believed he was being sincere, and others who interpreted it as one of Kuryokhin's most provocative act actions. "His mentality was much like [the right-wing] National Bolshevik leader Eduard Limonov's", contends his close friend and sometime manager Alexander Kan, who now works as a BBC journalist in London. "When I tried to talk about politics with him, I found out that he had suddenly turned rabidly anti-American. He was prophetic: he said, 'Now they are ready to bomb the Serbs, next they'll bomb us' – this was five years before the Nato bombings. Also he spoke of creating a Eurasian geopolitical axis between Berlin, Moscow and Tokyo. He was absolutely serious about these things, even if he always served his views with humour."

The underside of his anti-Americanism and anti-capitalism was how his wilfully non-conformist artistic stance coincided with a naive interest in a "pure" Russian nation, complete with its crypto-Nazi "Nordist" philosophy and its self-appointed messianic role in the world. "If you are a romantic, and want to take your romanticism to its logical conclusion, you become a fascist," Kuryokhin once told National Bolshevik magazine *Elementy* (Elements). Regardless of his motivations, a charismatic figure like Kuryokhin coming out on the night was quite a coup for the nationalists. "Starting approximately from the early 90s, extreme right wing and New Right ideas started to dominate in that part of the rock world, which could still be called the underground," summarised Alexander Verkhovsky, a Moscow journalist who has investigated Russia's extremist fringe groups. Sadly Kuryokhin died of a rare heart disease in 1996 before this last art-

political act was properly resolved or adequately explained. The ugly side of his legacy is its seeming legitimisation of Russian industrial subculture's lurch to the right. From Throbbing Gristle through Psychic TV and Laibach, industrial music has often assumed the sound and shape of the Control organism, seemingly exercising it with a zeal so excessive, they embarrass the very organism they model themselves on, while in the process revealing its true nature. The danger is such industrial subversions require their perpetrators to immerse themselves so deeply in their act, they might become the very thing they oppose.

Kuryokhin's particular brand of absurdism, however, predates Russian and Western industrial subcultures. It's more clearly rooted in the Soviet avant garde of the 1920s, when its corollaries of Suprematism, Futurism and Constructivism were fired by the revolutionary fervour that followed the Bolshevik victory in 1917. Kuryokhin's work bore the traces of the provocative "épater les bourgeois" humour of Futurist poet Vladimir Mayakovsky. At the same time he cast Pop Mechanics on a similar scale to the theatrical political rallies staged by the party in the early years of Soviet rule. Like the 20s avant gardists who choreographed mass rallies as a kind of Monumentalist theatre, Kuryokhin wanted to break loose from the confines that separated art from the streets. "We must ascend to power and turn the whole country into Pop Mechanics" was his catchphrase in the early 90s, reports Kan. "He wanted to shock people and not let them lul themselves into the bourgeois state of peaceful well-being."

In Russia, the present day mix of totalitarian politics and avant garde aesthetics is as potent as it is perfectly logical. After all, it is rooted in one of the few states where avant garde art and politics were temporarily fused in the ecstasy of revolution. The Western propensity to eulogise the ecstatic revolutionary art of the 20s – Malevich, Rodchenko, Mayakovsky et al – at the expense of the dark socialist realism that succeeded its repression by Stalin in the 30s, disguised its totalitarian impulses behind the heroic mask of martyrdom. As Russian émigré scholar Boris Groys has argued in his remarkable revisionist article "The Birth Of Socialist Realism From The Spirit Of The Russian Avant Garde" (1991) and in his 1992 book *The Total Art Of Stalinism*, the Russian avant garde was just as totalitarian as its successors in its constant calls to "throw the classics overboard from the steamship of modernity", as poets Vladimir Mayakovsky, Velimir Khlebnikov and other Russian Futurists had demanded in their first manifesto. Even though Russian Futurism was a highly idiosyncratic movement, characterised by Khlebnikov's invention of a Dadaistic irrational language, it took more than its name from Italian Futurism. Just as Marinetti, Russolo and their ilk venerated war, speed, noise and machines, their Soviet near-contemporaries celebrated the worker and the workplace, giving birth to an industrial cult of mobilised workers, machine-like forms and sounds, of rationality, technology and factories. And even after Stalin purged Soviet culture of its 'formalist' avant garde aesthetics, his conception of Soviet civilisation was nevertheless predicated on transforming Russia's ancient peasant-based agrarian economy into a 20th century hyper-industrial superpower. Indeed, industrialism constituted the Soviet mindset from the 20s until the end of the USSR in 1991. This is hardly surprising seeing how the Soviet Union set out to industrialise every aspect of life, from housing, the family and childcare to the semi-religious heroisation of the labour force as the "shockworkers" of the revolution.

So when industrial images, sounds and noises were reintroduced into Russian music in the 80s via Pop Mechanics, among other artists discussed here, they



A man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a light blue denim shirt, stands in a hallway. The hallway has a wooden door and a red wall. The lighting is dramatic, with strong shadows.

INDUSTRIAL

Tangents:

When perestroika's favourite pop mechanic Sergei Kuryokhin declared his allegiance to Russia's new right in the mid-80s, he renewed the avant-garde's ambivalent links with totalitarianism. Anton Nikkila investigates the questionable impact of Kuryokhin's swerve on the politics of later Russian industrial music, including AVIA, ZBA, Notchnot prospekt, Linja Hass and more

DISEASE

resonated loudly against the early Soviet machine aesthetics epitomised by, say, such films as Dziga Vertov's *Enthusiasm*. But Russia had to rediscover its industrial avant-garde roots via Western art books and 'Industrial' groups such as Einstürzende Neubauten, SPK, Test Department, Throbbing Gristle and – closer to home – the former Yugoslavia's Laibach. Its clumsy embrace of totalitarian politics, however, is entirely its own work. The most obvious explanation for its resurgence is the social and psychological effects of the collapse of Soviet Union.

During the liberalising high tide of late 80s perestroika that preceded the state's collapse, the formerly suppressed rock underground found itself wooed by the very forces that used to persecute it. In a late bid to win the people's hearts and minds, the party allowed musicians unprecedented access to mass audiences, recording opportunities and media exposure. The Soviet Union being a socialist economy, their emergence from the underground into the limelight was ironically funded by the state that formerly hounded them. But when the USSR faded away, dissident heroes no longer appeared so sexy to the sponsors of the new Russia. The very idea of underground was suddenly as obsolete as almost everything else from the not-too-distant past, be it the Soviet national anthem, the cult of Lenin, or rock artists defined by their opposition to the state.

Economically disenfranchised by Russia's new democracy and the rise of a 'capitalist' culture industry the leftists are disorientated as the once outlawed Russian masses. Some artists are similarly drawn to the extreme solutions espoused by new right-wing parties like the National Bolsheviks, or the Naz-Bols for short.

Underground rock's lurch to the right was instigated by two of its most consistent taboo-breakers, Yegor Letov and Sergei Zhukov. Zhukov used to lead DK, a controversial, left-Soviet version of Frank Zappa, before he was appointed Minister of Culture in the 1992 'shadow cabinet' of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy (the presidential candidate who threatened to invade half of Europe and Central Asia if he ever came to power). But he left Zhirinovskiy's party before its surprising success in the parliamentary elections two years later. Letov, who fronted hysterical low-tech punks Grahdanskaya Dborona, was prone to talk in romantic and vaguely Nietzschean tones about the 'existential underground'. For him this translated into a relentless hatred of all regimes, Soviet or post-Soviet. But it didn't stop him joining the National Bolshevik Party, led by scandalous novelist and troublemaker Eduard Limonov, and self-styled political philosopher and occasional rock writer Alexander Dugin.

From the start, the Naz-Bols called for terrorist acts and violent insurrection. Limonov even participated in the siege of Sarajevo on the Serbian side, posing for pictures with a machine gun. However, their main activity was publishing an intelligently written magazine *Elementy*, and the rowlier newspaper *Limonika* (*Hand Grenade*). The pair finally grabbed the headlines with a nationwide scandal when the charismatic Kuryokhin joined the National Bolshevik Party in 1995, a year before his death at the age of 42.

Dugin was the man who lured Kuryokhin over to the Naz-Bols. In September 1995 the two of them organised a fundraising Pop Mechanics extravaganza when Dugin was running for St Petersburg's city council on a Naz-Bol ticket (unsuccessfully, as it turned out). The event might have repulsed some of Kuryokhin's former underground friends and colleagues, but his presence helped sell the National Bolsheviks' 'revolutionary spirit' to scores of young sympathisers. Well, Naz-Bol rhetoric twinning Russian national pride with anti-capitalism must have sounded 'cool' to the citizens of a humiliated empire in which a particularly corrupted form of wild capitalism was running rampant. Naz-Bol party manifestos heavily convulsed punks, skinheads, anarchists, 'mystics',

'fanatical idealists' and other fringe radicals, but its active membership was relatively small. Some even doubted that Kuryokhin had truly gone over to the new right. "I think Kuryokhin was just making a fool of the Naz-Bols, but those donkeys took his words literally," contested leading Russian sax improviser Sergei Letov, in a recent interview with the Moscow magazine *KontakT*. Letov, one of Kuryokhin's closest musical collaborators between 1983-93, continues: "For Kuryokhin, National Bolshevism was another 'Lenin as mushroom' thing."

FLIGHTS OF INFECTION

"Basically, I like what has happened in Russia after the collapse of the USSR," asserts Nick Sudnick, one of the dozens of Leningrad musicians who passed through the menagerie of Pop Mechanics. He formed the Soviet noise group ZGA in 1984. "Society has become more open, even though they are now trying to strangle the media again. On the other hand, many people, including me, never guessed that everyday life would get this difficult. Artists and musicians are unable to earn any money, because their products just don't interest anyone in the situation where the average income of the population keeps on falling all the time."

With a name based on an untranslatable Russian wordplay on the notion of 'darkness', ZGA's Prog noise could serve as a metaphor of late Soviet or post-Soviet everyday life. It's rusty, broken-down, unpleasantly dominated by cold metal, and it functions according to an absurd, going-on-impenetrable logic. Sudnick currently operates out of a workshop in the centre of St Petersburg (Leningrad's pre-Revolution name restored), filled with beautiful, primitive Soviet electronics and junk iron objects. Throughout our meeting, he's constantly soldering bits of his self-built 'zgamoniuns' – variously, scrap metal instruments whose contact-naked springs are hammered with mallets; metal sheets gently stroked with medieval-looking miniature whips; and strings attached to brutally constructed iron grids. The day before, ZGA had participated in the fourth annual memorial festival of Sergei Kuryokhin, SKIF-4, performing for a warm and welcoming audience on a bill that also included Krautrock veterans Faust. Sudnick observes the rock underground's lurch to the right with a mixture of bemusement and scepticism.

"I don't have any clear-cut political opinions," he avers. "I think Dugin is an interesting author, and I see the work of Alexander [Lebedev-Fontov, with whom Sudnick plays in a duo called *Metaphora*] as good-natured, healthy humour. I don't take it as seriously as those blockheads in the National Bolshevik Party."

His own roots reach down into the 1980s USSR underground 'magnitizdat' circuit, which used to distribute noise and marginal rock cassettes by hand. Initially, ZGA were musically rooted in the '70s Rock In Opposition. Their Western Industrial noise influences – Nurse With Wound, more obscure American outfits such as Factus and Mnemonists – reached them somewhat later, during perestroika. "We realised we could never play as well and skilfully as the Western people we admired," he says. "At that point it became clear that we had to find something of our own, a language of our own. So in late 87 I started to build my own instruments."

Between 1989 and 1995 they released three CDs, *ZGAmoniuns*, *The End Of An Epoch* and *Sub Luna Morior*, on Chris Cutler's ReR Megacorp label, but once the surge of interest in Russian culture born during the Gorbachev years had run its course, ZGA went back to cassette only releases. (But perhaps their first CD in six years, *The Flight Of Infection*, out soon on US label Tariff, marks a resurgence of international interest in their music.)



In recent years ZGA have discarded the excesses of their Prog wackiness. In their place, Sudnick has foregrounded melodic motifs played on a simple electric organ. "I studied accordion when I was a teenager," he recalls. "I learned the standard Soviet accordion repertoire: a bit of classical, a bit of folk stuff. It was boring, but I dreamed that with my accordion skills I could one day get a chance to play on an *lanki*, the Soviet electric organ of the late 60s." The best moments of ZGA's current live set are difficult to place into any exact time and place. With Ekaterina Fodorova on ritual percussion, Ramil Shimsutdinov on trombone and Sudnick playing *zgamonioms*, tapes and accordion, the group look and sound like a science fiction outfit led by Tom Waits from a film Tarkovsky never got to make. Or perhaps their fusion of primitive Futurist Art of Noises and 'Slavic' melody resembles one of those faded factory orchestras of the late 1920s.

THE SOVIET KAFKAS AND AFTER

"In the 80s we were familiar with the music of Psychic TV, Laibach and others," remarks Alexei Borisov, who once fronted the briefly popular experimental group *Notchnoi prospekt*. "but we weren't really aware of the whole ideological or conceptual apparatus of Industrial music. It was only a bit later, in the early 90s, when I got hold of more CDs and various literature, that I got interested in that part of it for a while."

Notchnoi prospekt often sounded like the Western 'Industrial rock' of Controlled Bleeding or Clock DVA, though like their contemporaries they didn't let stylistic incongruities worry them. If one element distinguished *perestroika* era Russian industrial culture from its Western equivalent, it was operating under the real and constant risk of state censure. The extent of its reach could be measured by the lengths the authorities went to suppress it, according to a polemy Western subversives could only dream about. "Music is like a gas that enters your organism fast and unnoticeably," continues Borisov, by email. "I think it's a much more effective way to influence people than politics or even ideologies. But musicians are mostly a very egotistic, cynical and pragmatic bunch. We don't give a damn about the fate of the world, as Christ said when he was young. For the politics is like sports or theatre - it's simply a way of masking the real decision-making processes from the majority of people."

In the brief period following the legalisation of rock any remotely dissident music attracted curious masses to taste the forbidden fruit. Underground groups like Borisov's *Notchnoi prospekt* suddenly enjoyed unprecedented real world exposure, playing to arena-sized audiences around the USSR. "In those days we often played in stadiums, and sometimes the effect of our music on big crowds was scary. We were quite interested in the psycho-physical effects of music, and used heavy industrial noise as an important component. The crowds got really restless, started panicking and breaking things. Lately I've begun to think that these kinds of experiments in mass manipulation are simply dangerous and unethical. It's still very common in nose concerts in Russia that some audience members go wild and behave in a completely unbridled way when they hear this kind of music for the first time, especially if they're drunk of course: guys take all their clothes off, start twitching epileptically on the floor and so forth."

Notchnoi prospekt songs would suddenly collapse into strange arhythmic breakdowns or lengthy, repetitive and noisy improvisations. What distinguished them was Borisov's lyrics and vocals. In the spirit of 1930s novelist Andrei Platonov (sometimes called the 'Soviet Kafka'), his songs describe mundane situations and objects in absurd



detail, before a background apocalyptic vision outlining an environmental catastrophe or a mindless, totalitarian mob loose in the streets. "Reference books, original and revised editions," intones Bonsov in an inscrutable deadpan voice bordering somnambulism on *Democracy And Discipline*, a 1967 cassette reissued on the 1995 CO Kisloty.

"Hardbound and paperback. Usually I don't read them, they remind me of something... In the wintertime I burn lecture notes and I'll find a use for magazines as well. A scientific tome is a valuable gift, when nobody is expecting anything from you... Reference books are excellent firewood. Their authors know very well, whose heads will be topped next... The curtains on the window create a nocturnal mood. The professor who lived next door has died. It's not light anymore, but it's not dark yet. Light smoke floating out of chimneys, in the distance a joyous soprano. There's food on the table, canned delicacies. Today I received my food package from the research institute."

Bonsov strikes a similar tone in person. His studies of Western foreign policy at a Moscow research institute in the 1980s make him a lucid analyst of contemporary Russia, though his sly surrealist predilections have led to his gradual abandonment of Russian lyrics for 'speaking in tongues'. Notchov prospekt had folded by the mid-90s after releasing several albums, mostly as magisterial cassettes, by which time Bonsov's interests had diverted towards electronic music. In Russia, the best known of his later projects is F.R.U.I.T.S., his duo with Pavel Jagun, whose creative peak was the CO *Elektrostatik* (1997, Exotica). If at first it sounds much like Pan Sonic, a closer listening reveals a strange combination of musique concrète samples and stiff, funkless, unsyncopated, even 'constructivist' rhythms – the rhythmic principle characteristic of so much Russian underground music since the introduction of drum machines and MIDI in the 80s – is here taken to an extreme.

Solo, Bonsov combines his love of the absurd and the everyday with crude, minimal noise. He has also participated in a large number of collaborative projects playing in wildly differing styles from Ambient Industrial to improvised electronics. "Style is, after all, the thing that kills musical ideas and forces musicians to conform to strict norms," he argues. "I think that the original industrialists of the late 70s haven't been trying to break established stereotypes since the 80s, preferring instead to consciously interact with them. And as a result their music gradually became rather popular. There's not a trace of a breakthrough into something unknown in any of that."

"It's often said that Russian experimental electronic music doesn't interest people outside of this country, because it doesn't have a recognisable 'Russian sound'," he continues. "Maybe so, but I don't think that's a big problem. The real problem for us is the lack of musical infrastructures in Russia. If our recordings could be bought at least in some other cities except Moscow, not to mention in huge areas like Siberia, we wouldn't have to bother ourselves that much about trying to get our music heard in the West."

RETRO AVANT GARDISH

"Balancing between irony and genuine fascination is what has always interested me most," explains AVIA leader Nikolai Gusev, who lives with his family in St Petersburg in a solid Stalin-era housing block. Of all perestroika's strange fruit, AVIA were the group that most consciously embraced the Soviet cultural heritage of 1920s and 1930s. Even their name evoked the era: aviation as a pre-war symbol of technological progress and discovery. Consisting of five to seven musicians, AVIA invariably played with a group of young girls performing 'bio-mechanic' gymnastics and forming human pyramids in the totalitarian style of the 1920s



Ultra label boss Alexander Lebedev-Frontov: "I have been labelled a fascist in St Petersburg's press, but that's just good publicity"

and 30s. They would perform in factory worker overalls on a stage decorated with red, black and white quasi-constructionist symbols. AVIA's music is a cross between Soviet 'industrial marches' and Devo: mindless choruses, fast, driving rhythms and simple, fanfare-like melodies. Conceptually, they were similar to Laibach – though they claim they heard about the Slovenian group only in 1987, the first time they were permitted to tour outside the USSR. But the target of AVIA's satire was obvious to their 80s Russian audiences: Soviet propaganda, such as the 'mass songs' – politically correct, optimistic, patriotic – played incessantly on the radio.

"In AVIA there was the same kind of very fine balance," Gusev says. "We never wanted to parody anything, even though many saw us as anti-Soviet satire. I have always been very interested in the avant garde of the 1920s, which is for me on a par with punk rock of the more serious and fine varieties designed to tear down the walls. The Soviet avant garde of the 20s, Constructivism and so on were a huge breakthrough, a heavy blow on a hammer."

Their first LP, *AVIA – For Everyone* (a nod towards Mayakovsky's ode to Lenin, in which the phrase "For everyone" is repeated endlessly) came out on the English label Hannibal in 1990. They released two more albums in Russia, *Ura!* (Hurrah!, 1991) and *Pesni o prirode i lyubi* (Songs About Nature And Love, 1995) before going into semi-retirement. Though they occasionally play live, Gusev is now more preoccupied with his solo work. His first solo CD, called *Ispravlennoye – Verit!* (Believe The Corrections – words written on official documents, where edits have been made by hand), is a Laibach-inspired collection of awkwardly Sovietised cover versions of rockers like "Johnny B Goode" and Uniq Hee's "July Morning". Deliberately devoid of funk or soul, Gusev's vocals emphasise his Russian accent. It's his way of commenting on the young Russian rock groups who've abandoned the 'Soviet rock' tradition of the 80s, with its coded anti-establishment Russian lyrics, for MTV-ready alternative rock. The cleverness strikes an uneasy tone with its semi-retarded, mock-patriotic language: "Foreign artists often write good songs, but they are usually performed incorrectly, with all kinds of unnecessary Negro exaggerations. Thus it is time to show how they ought to be performed. There is no need to ape Negroes and their rhythms: instead you must stick to your real roots – marches and singalong drinking songs."

"I am a totalitarian and I have always liked the march-like elements in music," asserts Gusev in an authoritarian tone, a prankster's twinkle flashing intermittently behind his pilot specs. "In addition to that, I am a monarchist. I don't think totalitarianism or monarchy could be installed in Russia soon, but I think the country should move steadily towards authoritarian rule. So you could say I am a moderate right wing supporter."

TOHORROR BELONOS TO... HHOH?

An aura of Dostoyevskian gloom emanates from artist and musician Alexander Lebedev-Frontov, who looks more like a volunteer helping to restore an Orthodox church than the central figure he is in St Petersburg's extreme noise scene. He started making noise collages in 1979, aged 19, but didn't go public with them until the early 90s. Since 1995 he has run a label called Ultra, which has put out about 50 mostly cassette and CD-R releases by many of St Petersburg's noise/industrial/power electronics artists, such as ZGA, Vetrophonia, Monument Straiha and Bardosenebocube. Like many artists in Russia's heavily politicised cultural climate, Lebedev-Frontov has chosen his side in the power straggle. In the mid 90s he joined the National Bolshevik Party, but left when

he felt that extremist political groups had become "completely marginal and meaningless."

"I have been labelled a fascist in St Petersburg's press," he bristles continues, "but that's just good publicity for me. Actually I am not a racist at all. I was probably the most anti-racist person in the National Bolshevik Party, which caused some fuss in the Party. In the West, people like Boyd Rice don't fit into any parties, they are too anarchic and free-thinking for them, but here it's possible up to a certain point. You know, something similar happened to Italian Futurists like Marinetti and Russolo, whose thinking is closest to me. They didn't stay too long in Mussolini's camp, because when Mussolini really started to set up his new state, the artists and their wild fantasies were no longer needed. And it was a bit like that in the Soviet Union in the 1920s: the Soviet power didn't need the avant garde artists for too long after the Revolution. But I think the artists themselves also got tired of their experiments after they had completed them."

Lebedev-Frontov's solo project is called Linja Masa, whose accomplished yet debating album *Proletkult* was recently released by the German Forum Debie Propaganda. With tracks averaging between seven and 11 minutes and titles like "Total Mobilization", "Mechanization", "Gastov", "Lenin On The Labour Discipline", the album is clearly tied into the 1920s. Even by conventional noise standards, *Proletkult* is an oppressive affair characterised by the sound of shovels and other tools requiring backbreaking human toil and the bleak cheering of the masses. Aside from a Lenin sample on the opening track, no individual voices are heard.

"I think the most productive way of working for us would be to stay away from computers, and instead try to recreate the way in which Luigi Russolo worked," says Lebedev-Frontov. "I have always loved machine aesthetics and have always thought that Nick [Sudnick, of ZGA] and I are direct descendants of the Russian aesthetica of the 1920s. There's a psychological connection. Some of the sounds in *Proletkult* I recorded already in the 80s, when a friend of mine worked in a factory on the outskirts of Leningrad, and I went there to record the sound of the machinery."

Industrialists like Lebedev-Frontov and AVIA are not the only people mining the Soviet era for inspiration. A year ago President Putin tapped into the vitality of Soviet tradition by resurrecting the USSR's national anthem, albeit with new words. It has heralded the re-emergence of censorship and the KGB (now called FSB). Now that totalitarian ideas once again occupy the mainstream, where does that leave those avant gardists and industrial noiseis who marched in step with Russia's right wing radicals?

Some still feel that art and active participation in politics are essentially inseparable. When he's not making installations in art galleries around the world, one of Kuryokhin's closest allies, the former Pop Mechanic Afrika Bjugiev, also works in the Russian parliament as an aide to the vice chairman of the Committee for Security Policy. Meanwhile Eduard Limonov, the novelist leader of the Naz-Bols, was jailed this year for allegedly stockpiling machine-guns for his putative National Bolshevik Army. But the most puzzling news concerns Alexander Dugin, Kuryokhin's old buddy and the Naz-Bols' former chief ideologist. Once perceived as a crackpot on the margins of state politics, Dugin now leads a small new party called Eurasia, whose agenda is practically the same as President Putin's, only his is less diplomatic in tone. A more disturbing rumour claims that Dugin is acting as unofficial consultant on Putin's new 'security doctrine', which aims to restore the Soviet empire. Sergei Kuryokhin, is this your victory? The pity comrades you left behind to savour it. □ *Alexei Borisov and ZGA appear at Helsinki's Avario Festival this month: see Out There for details*

Charts

Playlists from the outer limits

(Tell us nothing: Annei Beresky's St. Petersburg apartment lives! [Tangerine page 121](#))

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Snoog
Run On Line (Deep City)
Amop Rock
Lotto Days (Dad Jax)
Puget On Da Bus
Puget On Da Bus (Carter)
Jah Wobble & Ryan Parker
Passage To Hades (3D Hertz)
Spezialmusik Music Ensemble
Windward (Tangerine)
Puli Ribbick
Tooth Works For Hardy Gurdy And Voice (Tooth)
Sorey Shamrock
Black Women (East West Japan)
Emilio Diaz-Infante & Chris Persykh
Wire And Wooden Boxes (Evolving Earth/Pul)
Noisegate
Suspended Animation Ambient Vol 1 (Turner)
Electric From Redhead
Hue De Sence (Tigerbeat)
Mullingaze
Hazen Mcmahood Jeb Behr Gass (Soleilmoon)
Various
Nurt Ribbles (Kilphen Motor)
Xhol Caravan
Mishmishians Live (Dunyo)
Han Beresh & Eugene Chelbourne
21 Years Later (Leo)
Dynamite
Operation 1 + 3 = 38 20 (Toombase)

Smoke And Mirrors 15

Jah Wobble & Ryan Parker
Passage To Hades (3D Hertz)
Transglobal Underground
You Boss Food Goner (Jax 21)
Ford Frith
Cleaning (Tied)
Various
Rough Guide To The Music Of Denmark
(World Music Network)
Steen Eric & Peter Schwain
Down From Life (Cops/Vigil)
Hoven Dross
Hype (Home)
Guerre
Hildegard Von Bingen (Northside)
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Vegetarian (One Little Indian)
3 Mustaphas 3
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Blunt Sharp's Terraplane
Blues For Next (Knitting Factory)
Lucie Andros
Life On A String (Nonesuch)
Marc Ribot
Saints (Division One/Mantic)
Oysterhead
The Grand Pecking Order (Elektra)
Tai Khe
Alynn Desires (Fat Khe)
Starcelito
Sound Dust (Daphnic)

Apartes Sonores 15

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Perlezen
Psychopomp (Zank)
Toshimaru Nakamura
Numb#2 (A Bunt Seiner)
Ply Run Am
Sedenta Ex Movellans (Conditment)
Ozan Ambarchi
Insolation (Tact)
M0
V St Ny Ra (Plein V)
Magpho & Ultra Minotaur
By Mail (Saari)
Hazard
Wind (Am International)
Norman D Mayer/Hugo Roussel Junior
Ultra Queen Monon (Profile Recordings)
Rauber
Sung Blat (Stalaglot)
Various
Moshema Ostmo (Trust)
Melodum
7" (Active Suspension)
D
LP (Boul Static Sound)
Laurent Dailieu
Superstern Notch (Sonnus)
Perlezen
Traction (Pier rids)

The Office Ambience

Various
Golden Years Of Soviet Jazz Vol 1 (Jax)
Le Tigre
Furthest Sweepsprings (Checks On Speed)
Various
Is The Beginning There Was Rhythm (Soul Jazz)
Cerebus
Pond (Mastalor)
Grateful Dead
The Golden Road (Rhino)
As One
21st Century Soul (Subcity)
The Rip-Off Artist
Pump (Mile Plateau)
Pierre Bastien
Meowd (Reshine)
Jim O'Rourke
I'm Happy And I'm Singing And A 1, 2, 3, 4 (Mego)
Morton Feldman
String Quartet #3 (The ART)
Redoubt Ascent
Junk Force EP (No Innocent)
Aufgehoeben: No Process Vs Gary Smith
Magnetic Mountain (Urban Mead)
Pavel Kuti
Fight To Win (Bardly)
Various
Dead! Meats Punk Rockers Uptown (Hewlett)
John Cage
#4 (Moesha)

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Compiled by The Wire Sound System

We welcome charts from record shops, radio shows, clubs, DJ's, readers, etc. Email editor@thewire.co.uk

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Soundcheck

This month's selected CDs, albums and singles

ACOUSTIC GUITAR TRIO

NCUS 46 CD

BY BARRY WITHERDEN

This trio comprises Neil Cline and Jim McKay in — yes, you get it — with Rod Poole on acoustic and bowed guitar. In a recent review Andy Hamilton jolts about the surprise of finding tunes on a Leo label release. A similar comment applies here. The music we expect from Incus has many merits, but sustained melismatic melody is not prominent among them. Yet the album has it in abundance, displaying the range, strength, boundary-crossing and genre-mixing flexibility of contemporary indie. The lead in establishing and developing melodies appears to come most frequently from McKay, who provides powerful lower register underpinnings. The long, magical closing track, "Sevenfold Step," is arguably the most "abstract," in terms of melody, but even when it is prominent the players never neglect the exploration of colour, texture and atmosphere. Along with the linear lyrics, the harmonic language is rooted in relatively "inside" traditions, but Poole gives it a halo of entire pantheon.

Poole co-founded the Oxford Impresario's Company in 1983, then moved to the US in 1989 to study just intonation with Ervin Wilson. On a number of occasions his shadowing of Cline or McKay goes close, simple phrases a patina of mystery, and much of the character of "Step" derives from his strong and controlled bowed guitar playing.

The soundtrack mapped out by this trio sometimes recalls that of the somewhat neglected Cuban composer Leo Brouwer, not least on the light, disciplined "Squeeze Toy" and "Web," but, as you would hope with improvised music, it has a greater fluidity. Cline was a participant in the linking, a beautiful album on the Cryptogramophone label, which was one of my favourite releases of 2000. AGT feels likely to be high on the list for this year.

ANTENNA FARM

FOG/SPUNKY TRACKS

PRVH040 34 CD

ANTENNA FARM/MAIN

HOMERICHON 31/555A/PLAAT CD

BY JEROME MARNESSE

Since their early experiments as an improvising turntable outfit, Antenna Farm have widened their scope, and amassed a formidable sonic arsenal in the process. Now they use a mixture of found sounds, radio signals and other samples. *Fog/Spunky Tracks* is a compilation of work from their last two years of operation (1999-2000), perhaps more aptly described on the sleeve notes as "early (raw) mess". The 19 pieces here form a disordered, dystopian urban labyrinth of sound, constructed (dismantled?) from a bewildering array of audio datasets.

Even the titles suggest that the duo revel in their status as sonic scavengers, trawling the streets for misadventured grit and garbage. "Power," "Smoked Out/Vision," "Through Burned Region". Chunky, abrasive blocks of sound and

noise are sourced and placed in startlingly irregular configurations with all the depth and texture of lightning flits. "Power Reconstruction" recalls early DnB industrial music on steroids, with hyperactive, pixelated drilling and smashing sounds: demolition time on a constant estate. "Smoked Out/Dead River" is full of obtuse bits of junk, sounding like the hidden workings of a mind thinking ten things at once. "Night Vision" fast-forwards a kind of sonic CCTV tape. These tracks work best on an individual level; taken together they lack overall logic and cohesions. And they are as enjoyable as rambling around in someone else's bad dream. By the first "Eat Spicy" you're shrivelled, bruised and battered, and over so slightly relieved.

Their collaboration with Main's Robert Hampson, however, mixes a more subtle, insidious vein of disquiet. It's the first official release in the Dutch Iberian project (although Bromberg CD). Stephan Mathieu & Eikehard Ehlers's Haven, came out previously, set up to realise collaborations which would otherwise be impossible due to a lack of time or equipment. There's more overall cohesion here than *Fog/Spunky Tracks*, but also fewer bold, hard edges. Hampson's role in the project is hard to discern: very specific, oblique scraps of what sounds like guitar work do crop up, but for the most part the disc is made up of rustling, buzzing, popping, squeaking, scratching electronic sounds. The five unnamed tracks often descend into total silence, although deep listening reveals a variety of microsounds and subtle interferences. For all its admirable sense of restraint, some may find this set of fragments less satisfying, with too many isolated, disconnected bits, and not enough bite.

TATSUHIKO ASANO

GENNY HANIVER

GGST 011 CD

BY JOHN MAVEY

Even though his GGST imprint has been going for some time now it still feels something of a novelty to discover Alec Empire listens to music that can be described as "beatnik". As it happens, Empire set up GGST to provide an outlet for Japanese guitarist Tatsuhiro Asano, whose records are far removed from the familiar brutality of Digital Hardcore.

Five years later, the elusive and slow-moving Asano has finally delivered the ten tracks of his album, including two of the "Bonjour" 7" that rebekah caught Empire's attention. The prevailing mood is hardly radical: space age lounge vibes are fed into a computer and gently subverted. Indeed, when his guitar twangs indolently and his little drum machines rattle unobtrusively, Genny Henner recalls the more ebullient of the many Tortoise imitators.

Mercifully, Asano has a few more tricks than post-rock's jazz-lite brigade. Just when a track threatens to be a standard downtempo shuffle, he scrambles the beats and breaks the complacency. Often, nothing fits in quite the right places, leaving the music feeling haphazard rather than bland, even when Asano tries a little guitar fingerpicking. On "Old-Old", Genny

Henner comes close to a companion piece to Susumu Yokota's *Magic Thread*, albeit without Yokota's clear understanding of House music's dynamics. A whimsical strain makes itself felt through the lines of "Bonjour", but the tap steel effects and trany emotice provoke a local companion to the minnows of World Standard rather than, say, the exquisite detailing of Nobukazu Taniguchi. In all, more quaint than transcendent.

JUSTIN BENNETT

MAGNETIC CITY

SPHORE 044 CD

BY WILL MONTGOMERY

Magnetic City is a 40 minute soundtrack built from field recordings made in Barcelona. Bennett's source materials are mainly anonymous: air conditioning units, traffic, groups of people and birds; and even then they're mostly transformed beyond recognition. A church bell and a few stratches of speech are the only things that could be tied to the city, whereas most of the piece could have been recorded in Berlin or Birmingham. When I last visited Barcelona the salient sounds were televisions, the scrape of cutlery on plates at restaurants, voices and large dogs in tiny flats that acted as resonant speaker cabinets when they barked. Bennett's mix, however, is not the direct representation of such sonic events: he seeks instead to communicate the "hidden energies" of the city. His approach draws on the pervasive and idiosyncratic persuasive notion of the spirit of place.

With the preceval reuse of psychogeography in the mid-1980s, the neo-Althusser became a familiar pre-millennial cultural figure. Writers as diverse as Charles Olson and Walter Benjamin were mined for ways of exploring the occulted interstices of urban geography. But the public wanted Peter Ackroyd — Cliff Richard's simpler to learn Strindberg's bone curled lip. If you were having trouble reading the city, you could even buy a handy City Reader. The problem with mainly abstract sound works such as Bennett's is that you end up liking the "hidden energies" entirely on trust — if you take them on at all. At best, perhaps, the piece serves simply as a conceptual peg to hang the work on. Magnetic City's sleeve has stacks of notecaps populated with keywords of TV variety and the press feels like a probing of the kinds of noises that you habitually screen out. It is a flag of warning, deep throbs and fast, fuzzy drones. It moves gracefully from atmosphere to atmosphere, with delicate overlaps. Its deeper tones benefit from high volume foreground listening. The ones of birds are cleverly used as a structuring device to pull the piece's threads together. Whether or not it's a plausible reading of a particular place or a stylification of inert sound data is up to the listener.

RAOUL BJÖRNENHEIM

APCALYPSO

CUNEIFORM RUNS 164 CD

BY TOM PERCHARD

This 40 minute piece was originally commissioned for the 1995 Helsinki Festival

where it was performed by 30 guitarists, eight bassists and four percussionists. This second version has Finnish guitarist/composer Björnenheim conducting every part. He has long dived on musical traditions from around the world, and here he has built a work that owes its elemental palette and spare gestures to Korean Snow trance music. But something has got lost in the translation, and the result tends to browbeat rather than hypnotise.

Mirror like in structure, *Apocalypse* opens and closes with a booming march out of the dark ages called "Oade", and some reflective, newb-tender material ("Heavy/Spirits"). The climactic title track — equal parts Bartók, M-Base and *Moan Way* theme tune — aspires two thirds of the way through. The placement of these narrative signposts describes a third and tested dramatic shape, prescribing a particular response to the work's path. At the same time, the rhythmic and harmonic bawling of Björnenheim's composition proscribes most moment to moment interest. It's a shame that the guitarist's superb improvising is kept under wraps. Most of the time, scale replaces detail, with *Apocalypse* demanding the listener to submit to a totemic group widdle.

The terrifying monochrome of massed guitars provokes strong reactions — John Cage famously slurred some of Glen Branca's music as "fascist". While Björnenheim's music is driven by solitary and form rather than material and process, there's still something a bit distasteful about *Apocalypse*'s grandiose tribalism. Branca's symphonies use the limited stimuli potential of a guitar group to explore complexities of acoustics and noise. Instead of exploring, Björnenheim aims to entrance, but the flabby power of his scoring can only lull and bolder.

It's no coincidence that the best music here is also the least resistant. After the portentiousness of *Apocalypse*'s opening, on "Surf Dance" Björnenheim builds a warp from quiet harmonics and percussive tapping of the guitar body, washing chords over the top. Finally, a quite beautiful interlude that doesn't dictate how to listen or what to feel.

DON CHERY/ KRZYSZTOF PENDECKI

ACTIONS

INTUTION 82068 CD

BY ALAN COWLEY

There was a time when jazz reviewers were sceptical or openly dismissive of trumpeter Don Chery's explorations of the broader musical world. His engagement with non-Western musics was often viewed as a quirky aberration, a taste for hybridisation about adding nothing to his stature as one of the major architects of the free jazz revolution, and arguably detracted from it. In retrospect, however, Chery's unbridled vision is almost an index of a paradigm shift in our musical awareness, a realignment that foreshadowed important changes in the way many of us now listen.

Here are a few aspects of Chery's composition "turnus" — *The Life Exploring Force*, a chanted raga is overlaid with braying trumpets and wailing

**CHARLEY PATTON/VARIOUS
SCREAMIN' AND HOLLERIN' THE BLUES:
THE WORLDS OF CHARLEY PATTON**
REVENANT 212 7900

The late John Fahey, the originator of this outstanding seven CD set devoted to the world, music and legacy of Mississippi Delta blues player Charley Patton, once told me that the reason he liked Patton and his contemporary Delta blues singers so much was because they were angry. At first, Fahey said, he had failed to identify the anger in Patton's music because he was unknowingly sharing the same emotion. It was only when he sought medical help through psychoanalysis that the penny dropped. "I played some of the records to [my] doctor," he explained, "and he said, 'These guys are as angry as hell.'"

During the late 1920s and early 1930s, when these recordings were made, Patton and his associates had plenty to be angry about. For poor African-Americans who lived and labored on the Southern plantations as sharecroppers, life was hard and cheap. While communal life on the plantation was not restricted to work alone, the only levity was provided by blues and gospel music at entertainments and worship which also served as a kind of social grapevine. The music also forged a direct link from the Delta to the big cities when select artists were recorded by companies such as Paramount, Vocalion, Dixie and Herwin.

Patton was auditioned in the spring of 1929 on Dockery's plantation in Sunflower County by talent scout HC Speer, who was brought down by a letter of self-recommendation from the blues singer himself. In June that same year, Patton recorded the 14 titles for Paramount, in Richmond, Virginia, that secured his future as "Mississippi's first blues singer of consequence." After a sequence of incidents that saw Patton being banished from Dockery's, joining a minstrel show in Nashville and taking on a protégé called Booker Miller, he was finally tracked down by Speer, who persuaded him to record a further 24 titles. Over the next few years Patton was nearly killed in a knife fight, jailed, then bailed, and recorded more sides, this time for the American Record Company. He eventually died of heart failure on 28 April, 1934, leaving behind a musical legacy that became the

beacon that guided so many future folk/blues players from Robert Johnson and Howlin' Wolf to Woody Guthrie and Bob Dylan.

His songs such as "Pony Blues", "Spoonful Blues" and "Scream'n' And Holler'n' The Blues" (the latter recorded under the name The Masked Marvel as a publicity stunt) veered from the playful to the devotional. "Pony Blues" fairly canters along, with Patton sounding almost upbeat as his ghostly guitar gently vibrates in the background. This is in sharp contrast to the two parts that make up "Prayer Of Death", a suitably funereal, gospelised blues dirge which begins with a short flurry of tangled string improvisation before Patton strikes an almost evangelical tone into his playing and singing. Although he was no preacher, he possessed the skill and ability to compel people to listen to what he had to say.

Of course, he was not only speaking to their souls, he was also addressing the events that scarred their lives. When the great Mississippi flood of 1927 caused scores of families to perish in the deluge, Patton responded with the darkly moving "High Water Everywhere". This song in two parts justifiably earned him the accolade 'King of the Delta Blues' among blues scholars and record collectors. On one level, "High Water Everywhere" is evocative frontline reportage, with Patton's raw, pained vocal roaring like the tumultuous flood waters he's describing over a simply strummed, but remarkably complex acoustic guitar pattern. Further percussive accompaniment is provided by his steady bootheel stomp and rhythmic slapping of the hollow wooden body of his instrument with the flat of his right hand. Patton was encouraged to record "High Water Everywhere - Part II" for the flip. This time, however, the mood of his song sounds more haunted and fearful, as if the rising tide of muddy water is closing over his head, about to drag him and his guitar down into the pit of some freezing hell. It is an astonishing performance with electrifying accomplishment. Its enduring power recently inspired Bob Dylan's gloss on the song, dedicated to Patton, on his latest album *Love And Theft*.

"High Water Everywhere" is one of the main highlights of this expansive, elaborately constructed and superbly illustrated leather-bound 78

formatted book containing essays, annotated lyrics and the discs, sheathed in a sturdy slipcase. It houses the complete Patton recordings - together with selections from contemporaries within his immediate circle and players who went on to carry his flame - spread over the seven CDs (each mounted on a separate 10" black cardboard disc to simulate a shellac 78 rpm record), a sheaf of record label stickers and Patton's 1929 Paramount ads, together with a 12B page set of sleeve notes, by John Fahey among others, plus a reproduction of Fahey's rare "Master's thesis" on Patton, originally published in 1970. That this hefty set easily surpasses earlier attempts to set the Charley Patton story straight is immediately obvious, although as a basic primer Catfish's recently released *The Definitive Charley Patton* triple CD is a recommended cheaper alternative.

Scattered throughout the set and filling up "Disc Six: Charley's Orbit - Songs" are recordings from such Patton contemporaries as Henry "Son" Sims (one of Patton's early recording partners), Tommy Johnson, Ma Rainey, The Mississippi Sheiks, Son House and Bukka White - who went on to record for Fahey's Takoma label. The "Charley's Orbit" disc carries on from where Revenant's earlier, groundbreaking *American Primitive* compilation of early, rough and ragged gospel music faded out, with a further selection of tremendously varied music from a variety of astonishing players. Standout tracks like Walter "Buddy Boy" Hawkins's "Voice Throwin' Blues" also serve to locate the blues in the broader framework of American popular music, spanning minstrelsy, music hall and Vaudeville in which Patton also operated. It's a remarkable novelty blues where Hawkins adds a hallucinatory ventriloquist like response vocal to the gradual acceleration of his guitar playing.

On the final disc four blues voices can be heard reminding about Patton, the most fascinating of which is a late 60s interview between blues scholar and collector Gayle Dean Wardlow and HC Speer, the former talent scout who 'discovered' Patton. Speer's memories of the blues singer, together with his down to earth explanations of how the blues evolved, strip the music clean of any nostalgic or sentimental feeling that the set's trimmings might engender. **C**



**Edwin Pouncey opens up
Patton's box and gets
down with the demons
that drove the king of the
Delta blues singers**

Soundcheck

BLETCUM FROM BLECHDOM HAUS DE SNAUS TIGERBEAT5 MEDW033 CD

Most experimental electronics is anal retentive – every glitch and click anxiously placed just so. In contrast, Blectum From Blechdom are 'anal expulsive' (to borrow a concept from their San Francisco comrade Jay Lesser). But this female duo, who lurk behind the aliases Kevin and Bleivn, aren't just sonic messsthesists; they're positively obsessed with all things faecal. The sleeve of their *Bad Music And Buttpoints* EP featured the imprint of their own hindquarters, and toilet humour is upfront in their name: Blectum echoes 'rectum', while 'blech' is the giggling sound American kids make to indicate revulsion. The music itself often sounds onomatopoeic, its squits and plops practically demanding titles like "Audio Stool" and "Shit-hole".

Those two tracks come from Blectum's debut EP *Snauses And Maltards*, which originally appeared last year on the Orblomg Musok imprint, and whose nine tracks make up the first third of this CD. Vaulting past this year's *Arse Electronica* prize-winning album *The Messy Jesse Fiesta*, the rest of the record takes in all 15 tracks from *De Snaunted Haus*, their most recent release on Tigerbeat5. Here, Blectum usher us into an *Ubu Roi*-like fantasia of grotesque scatology and depraved sexuality, populated by unwholesome critters with names like *snaus*, *sea slurper* and *bee-bug*. *Snauses* are vermin who live in toilets and ambush people at their most vulnerable, biting their toes off. They have a single 'bitchole' through which they eat, excrete, breathe, fornicate and reproduce. Then there's *Malfard*, a scientist duck who experimentally breeds *snauses* with extra orifices for his perverted sexual research.

The macabre adventures of this bestiary – seemingly hallucinated by a wartime fiend channelsurfing between wildlife documentaries, porn and a David Cronenberg movie – are recounted via between-track micro-dramas, performed by Kevin and Bleivn in exaggerated thespian tones and sometimes fed through vocal treatments for added delirium. Breaching Techno's taboo about using the human voice (one track is pointedly titled "In Case

You Forgot, We Talked On This Record"), Blectum shatter glitchtronica's cool with goofy girlish glee and Shotton-style defiance. But the effect goes well beyond Ministry of Silly Voices, and frequently becomes genuinely unnerving and creepy.

The earliest Blectum performances took place at clandestine raves thrown by the duo in the basement beneath the concert hall of Mels, the Oakland, California music college where Kevin & Bleivn are students, and whose illustrious alumni include Pauline Oliveros, Steve Reich and Morton Subotnick. Blectum music reflects this high/low incongruity: toy-tono Tekno riffs, shredded Jungle breaks and bursts of House's hi-hat/kick rhythm, are meshed disjointedly with musique concrète-style smeared and scumbled soundgobs. Tracks like "Bastard Child" recall 4 Hero at their 1993 darkness peak: vocal samples like melted candles, loops that unspool like glaucous intestines, angelic-demonic shriek riffs. It's a sort of devolved rave music, suggesting the alternate route London pirate radio might have taken if Jungle had never solidified a genre, and instead the first Generation E kept on taking the bad medicine while the music got fierier and fierier. Sheer unsanitary insanity, *De Snaunted Haus* is an infirmary of sound, teeming with sickly melodies, fever-dream apparitions, degenerative nerve disorder twitches and wizzed noises as perturbing as the plates in a medical textbook.

Blectum use a lot of dinky sounding mechanistic melody/riffs suggestive of music boxes, carry shows, or player-pianos (Conlon Nancarrow is one of their favourites). It's a flavour that evokes the uncanny aura of automata and clockwork toys, making the flash on the sharp-fanged demon dolls in *Barbarella*, or the kitsch animatronic companions built by the prematurely aged android designer in *Blade Runner*. Electronic musicians usually evoke a childhood idyll – Mouse On Mars's ice cream van trindles, Boards Of Canada's faded photo poignancy, Blectum, though, plug into the 'imp of the perverse' side of predisposition: the sheer appetite for destruction that inspires surreal acts of vandalism or grossness, like smeared dogshit over the swings and slides at the local playground. The between-song skits recall the comic playlets you might have tape-recorded as a

kid, complete with giggles and muffled lines. It's revealing that the only word for this kind of mischief and humour we have is gender-specific: puerile. Yet Blectum's scatomania seems somehow distinctly female, perhaps tapping into the same energies of body disgust and abjection that fuel extreme conditions like bulimia. If the girlfriend in Devo's "Sloppy (I Saw My Baby Getting)" ever got to tell her story, this music might be her posture.

Probably an inspired aberration, Blectum nonetheless strike me, potentially at least, as harbingers of a sort of Riot Girl for electronics. With their private jokes, lo-fi approach, and brattiness, they're a bit like a Haggy Bear influenced by early Prodigy rather than early Pastele. More than anywhere in electronic music, they probably belong to a lineage of outsider rock: The Shaggs, The Residents ("Going Postal" could be straight off *Commercial Album*), Royal Trux's ultra-primitive *Twin Infinitives*.

In this art brut spirit (and their cover art does recall the compulsive doodles of insane artists like Adolf Wölfli), this CD closes with "Bad Music", one of two previously unreleased tracks. A Christopher Cross-like ballad, just piano and erratic vocals, "Bad Music" is genuinely awful. But it does serve as a Blectum manifesto, expressing both their "accept yourself" ethos (like Riot Grrl, they're anti-cool and pro-nerd) and their willingness to sample absolutely anything ("Right Time Right Place" trumps V/V/M by using the ghastly flute riff from Men At Work's "Down Under"). Almost by definition, 'good music' can only confirm and conform to established notions of quality and distinction; besides, there's simply way too much fine music in the world already. 'Bad music', though, still has the capacity to surprise and delight, through its deformity or simple failure to reach its own aspirations. It's also true that pathbreaking genres (like darkside jungle in 1993) often initially sound plain wrong. Self-consciously violating the diagonal between beauty and ugliness, art and trash, is a difficult act, but Blectum have pulled it off. Sadly, this CD might be the duo's final release, as the partnership, always volatile, is now in total separation. But here's hoping Kevin and Bleivn make up, and give us more of their jolte laide genius. □

Simon Reynolds re-examines the scatology of San Francisco's plugged-in riot grrrl twins in light of their Arse Electronica success



saxophones, a churning jazz ensemble subsides to allow a coterie fife its way into a plastic haze is whiffed in the distance; then there are the Oriental scales and repeated phrases inspired by Ravi Shankar, a rapturific fusion of Debussy and Phishers Sanders; collective dissonance, isolated sweetness... "Hummus" appears on the disc complete with "Sika Rains (Lancers)," where the trumpeter echoes an initially diffident audience at the Oosterschelinge Music Festival in October 1971 to join him in an Indian vocal exercise. Like Riley and La Monte Young, Cherry had studied Indian vocalization with Pandit Pan Neth. Cherry looked to Africa as well as Asia. But his questing spirit also led him to the heart of the European avant-garde, as embodied in Krzysztof Penderecki, the Polish composer who, by the close of the 1960s, stood at the cutting edge of European classical music. It's ironic that as the significance of Cherry's bold fusion is increasingly recognized, Penderecki's reputation has dropped away, following his retreat into secure tradition. For that reason alone, disregarding for a moment the music's intrinsic interest, this issue of the concert where "Hummus" was followed by Penderecki's *Actors For Free Jazz Orchestra* is fascinating.

The New Eternal Rhythm Orchestra, convened to interpret both poems, reads like a catalogue of America's purest improvisers: Albert Mangelsdorff and Paul Rutherford on trombones, Manfred Schoof, Tomasz Stankiewicz and Kenny Wheeler on trumpets; guitarist Tony Rydyk; drummer Hans Bennink; bassists Buschi Niebergall and Hans-Martin. Fred Van Hove on keyboards, and a reed section featuring Günter Hampel, William Breuer, Gus Gussek and Günter Kämpel. On "Hummus," Dutch singer Lies McGilchrist takes a prominent role. Cherry's wife Maqui plays tambourine and their three-year-old son Eagle Eye makes his recording debut on drum and small guitar.

The Penderecki piece uses scored prompts to steer the improvisation and marshal effects and techniques. It has its amazing passages, but overall the musicians seem constrained by the composer's affinity, whereas the compositions many of them tackled under the banner of the Globe Unity Orchestra served as springboards to their creative energy. The Cherry piece, on the other hand, is splitting, driven by affirmation in both raucous and serene guises.

CHESSIE OVERNIGHT

PLUG RESEARCH PHR10106/EFA270815 CD

DNTEL LIFE IS FULL OF POSSIBILITIES

PLUG RESEARCH PHR10105/EFA270815 CD

BY PHILIP SHEUBENBURG

Straying ever further from its early avant Techno leanings, the Plug Research label might drift increasingly with pop, but the results are as unpredictable as the label's most "out" projects. Chessie's last album, for Oakland's now defunct Deep Beat label, basked in the dub signatures that have been slavishly imitated and perfected by a generation of outward-looking indie rockers and bedroom tapesters. On their third album, the duo of Stephen Gardner and Ben Bales traffic in a merger of styles — namely post-rock and electronics, for want of better terms — provocatively attempted by late 90s indie-rockers, fusing moody washes of guitar with primitive drum

loops. But Chessie's superior handle on production trumps, say Third Eye Foundation's sketchbook-like recordings, and their intusist in series goes far beyond the likes of Bowery Electric's sometimes reductive pop. Certainly a "redemption" on the aesthetics of late night teen trash. Overnight throbs with metallic clankings, washes of white noise and high-headed bass melodies suggestive of unflagging forward motion. Loops abound throughout, but Chessie wisely avoid the temptation to let their cycles speak for themselves, weaving them into ever-unraveling layers. And there's more than a hint of Onyx Beat sister label Stumbleland's mopey jangle in these songs.

Despite its gestures toward pop, Overnight remains an instrumental project, but Dntel's Jimmy Tamborello — previously known for *Early Works For Me & My Works For You* on the Southern California CD-R label Pithello — recruits vocalists Chris Gurnea (bleached-out Sparks), Mia Doi Todd, Rachel Hades (The Oog), Benjamin Gibbard (Death Cab For Cutie), and his goatee-prone Meredith Furrine, to flesh out his music's rough-edged shimmer with new, litigating narratives. In places, murkily fanged and frenzied choirs provide the backdrop for Todd's breathy confessional, while yelpophone and drum 'n' bass rambles cut through the mark. Other tracks are less melancholy, but a wash of dry-ice harmonics and chopped vocals works to similar effect. Elsewhere, Dntel's approach is similar to Chessie's, with a fat, digital bass playing against pined acoustic guitar and a backdrop of pestil oostuned static. Occasionally, clanks and pulses converge, falling into a pattern remarkably like Racheztronic's to construct a flickering image of techno that seems to dissipate bit by bit.

MILES DAVIS THE COMPLETE IN A SILENT WAY SESSIONS

COLUMBIA/LEGACY ACK185562 3XCD

BY JUAN COWLEY

On 18 February 1969 Miles Davis and producer Teo Macero went into the studio with bassist Dave Holland, drummer Tony Williams, guitarist John McLaughlin, Wayne Shorter on soprano saxophone and an electric keyboard trio of Joe Zawinul, Herbie Hancock and Chick Corea. The session resulted in *In A Silent Way*, an album of glimmering surfaces and coolly hypnotic grooves that estranged Davis's hardcore jazz followers. Unsympathetic critic John Llewellyn later complained that the record is "sickly sweet and effective." Its effectiveness took the form of seductive beckoning to a broader audience, especially listeners recently attuned to the flagrant shimmer of psychedelic rock.

After the challenging abstraction of the music Davis made with his outstanding mid-60s group, the album was startling in its directness. The mists of opacity, obliqueness and intropection had suddenly lifted. In a Silent Way is often cited as the first jazz rock fusion record. A counterpoint claim, although the genre's main protagonists were vividly present. Little of what subsequently emerged under that banner could rival the moody appeal of its three peers. Later in 1969 Davis's enthusiasm for the music of Sly & The Family Stone and James Brown would come to fruition with the epochal *Bitches Brew*. On this gemlet, more restrained albeit the infusion of funk is deep chilled, not driving but drifting

loosely into newly opened spaces. Despite the presence of the impeccable Williams marking time with pinpoint precision throughout, Davis's entrancing "Shhh/Peaceful" seems to sidestep time and enter a floating world of mirroring keyboards, suspended over an insistent cyclical dialogue between Holland and McLaughlin. Sprightly, but with characteristic eloquence, Davis and Shorter blow fire and ice through that mesh. The leader's other composition here, "It's About That Time," has a similar feel, but is more bluesy and earthbound. Shrewd editing has framed it within the tide track, Zawinul's melody perched down on Davis's instruction to a condition of fragile beauty.

Now the finely judged original album has been repackage with music from other sessions dating from 24 September 1968 to 20 February 1969. An illuminating context is gained: something of the singular magic of *In A Silent Way* heard in isolation is lost. It's a dilemma familiar from comparable reissue projects, but arguably heightened in this case because the original release occupied its own distinctive space so completely. Much of the accompanying material (the best of it) has been available before, scattered across other releases.

"Madamisselle Mabry" and "Felon Brun" were used to round out Miles De Krimayana "Ascend" came to light on *Circle In The Round*, "Splash," also included there, is now issued as its full form. "Two Faced" and "Dial M For Anthony Wilson Williams Process" surfaced on *Water Routes*, and "Directions" (in two parts) lent its name to a bits and pieces collection.

The previously unissued material includes a brief alternate take of "In A Silent Way/It's About That Time," employing a shuffling rhythm that alters the character of the piece fundamentally, and confirms the quality of the official version. Other versions of that and "Shhh/Peaceful" are included in full for the first time. "Splashdown," a chugging first cousin of the earlier "Splash," was recorded late in November 1968 by the octet minus McLaughlin. "The Ghetto Walk," a ball hour remade from the final session, is unexpectedly pensive and Joe Chambers replacing Williams on drums, McLaughlin sounding unusually tentative and Davis making a delayed entry. Zawinul's "Early More," from the same session, is wistful verging on lethargic. There's a distinct sense that the real work had been done.

An uneven batch, but this compilation sheds light on Davis's interest in patterned repetition and the free elaboration of long, sinuous melodic lines, as well as the persistence of blues-based straightforwardness edging into funk. Access to the complete sessions sheds a wider lens onto the trumpeter's entry into an important phase of his musical life, which continues to exert a powerful influence. It also confirms that the right decisions were made at the time: In A Silent Way, as we already know it, contains the crucial music.

JAMES DILLON VERNAL SHOWERS

MONTAGNE NAIVE MONT0248 CD

BY PHILIP CLARK

Coming from the more radical wing of the British contemporary music scene didn't stop James Dillon celebrating his 50th birthday with the premiere of his Violin Concerto at last year's Proms. Dillon has always had a natural affinity

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Julian Cowley bears witness to trumpeter Dave Douglas's political awakening

**DAVE DOUGLAS
WITNESS**

BMG/SLEJEBIRD 0902983763 CD

Reading of the rising profits of weapons manufacturers while traveling in Italy, as Nato bombs fell on Serbia, Dave Douglas became aware of the terrible hardships half a million dispossessed and desperate people were suffering just across the border from his journey. It must have seemed as if a bridge he had built within his own life had been destroyed by the military actions. In the early 1990s Douglas had established a musical affinity with the region, exploring the spirit of Eastern European folk traditions in *Tiny Bell Trio*, with guitarist Brad Shepik and drummer Jim Black. Incensed by this concrete instance of the global coexistence of extremes of poverty and wealth thrown up by Nato's action, he resolved to make a musical statement that might endure longer than a few platitudes hurled against injustice. Aware that bearing witness to oppression is not just a matter of statistics, but entails engagement with complex reflections and responses, Douglas wrote *Witness*. Consisting of nine connected pieces, each is dedicated to an individual (or group) who has issued a creative, nonviolent challenge to the status quo.

These figures include Nigerian novelist Ken Saro-Wiwa, Indonesian author Pramodya Ananta Toer, American-Palestinian intellectual Edward Said, Bangladeshi poet Taslima Nasrin and Egyptian writer Nawal El Saadawi. Opting to focus on their multifaceted example rather than on his own immediate rage when confronted by that raw, unacceptable data, Douglas has produced a complex testimony that raises his own considerable creativity to a new level. It's not just that he continues to demonstrate rare skill and imagination as a trumpeter. Vitality, he is able as a composer to draw upon extremely varied playing experiences in order

to write music that is itself as multifaceted as his subjects. *Witness* is not a catalogue or collage of styles but music written with a wide spectrum of expressive resources readily to hand, and with suitably sensitive and versatile players available to perform it.

Douglas has real flair for handling instrumental colour, texture and density, creating sparkling surfaces that interweave regularly into kaleidoscopic swirls. A dozen musicians interact here without a conductor. The core of the group has had extensive experience of working with Douglas in other contexts. Violinist Mark Feldman, cellist Erik Friedlander, bassist Drew Gress and drummer Michael Sann have joined him in the group *Parallel Worlds*. Chris Speed has played clarinet and tenor saxophone with *The Dave Douglas Sextet*, which has also featured trombonist Joshua Roseman. Other participants are Bryan Carrott on vibraphone, mambo and glockenspiel, Joe Daley on tuba, Ikeu Mori on electronic percussion, Yuka Honda on sampler and vocalist Tom Waits.

The guest spot from Waits is indicative of Douglas's subtlety and conceptual maturity. The singer appears on the long track "Mahfouz", where he reads from the writings of Egyptian Nobel Prize winner Naguib Mahfouz. His voice is mixed low, placed within the ensemble sound rather than against it. The words are discernible, but only with effort. Waits's gruffness is balanced by Speed's tender, wistful clarinet, then by Feldman's brittle, twittering violin. It's less a setting of Mahfouz than a translation of the spirit of his text into Douglas's own terms. Mori and Honda are comparably understated, integrated in ways that nudge the music's predominantly jazz voicings onto other ground.

Cross-fertilisation of various musics is a key part of *Witness*'s design. Themes that grow stronger with repeated listening, eloquent solos winding horizontally

through skilfully located ensemble verticals, a rapid succession of striking instrumental combinations, meticulously calculated forms alive with spontaneity – all make for an outstanding record. Arguably its most impressive aspect, however, is Douglas's expanded language, complete with World Music inflections, chamber music accents and electronic nuance. He likes to cite John Coltrane, Igor Stravinsky and Steve Wonder as primary influences. But the success of *Witness* rests upon how its seamless blend of musical elements arises foremost from within Douglas's own experience as a performer, from his conservatory training and his work with his own diverse groups such as the aforementioned *Tiny Bell Trio* and *Charm Of The Night Sky*; with veteran jazz pianist Horace Silver and John Zorn's *Musada*; with European free improvisors, Japanese pop experimentalists and American rock musicians. That breadth informs the music and enables it to bear the weight of its profoundly serious purpose.

Still, on the album's cover Douglas says it's fine with him if we "enjoy this purely as music", even though he would prefer his audience to pursue the trail he's laid down with his grouping of dedicatees. Well, certainly, it can be heard apart from its political context, in ignorance of the experience that prompted it. But *Witness* doesn't lend itself to passive listening. For one thing, it's remote from the sentimentality and self-righteousness that can afflict crude protest. Rather, the shifting moods of this ambitious music are too palpably bound to emotional and intellectual commitment. The album's release is timely, provoking and suggestive. Art may not play a direct role on what the media like to construe as the world stage, but creative testimony such as this forms a necessary link in the lifeline when the destructive tide is on the rise. □

for string instruments and as this survey of his string music — played by members of The Arditi Quartet — shows, he's absorbed by the microtonal possibilities and the shadowy gleamy effects that strings can offer. Rather like a sculptor recognizing the figure he's about to carve is already in the stone, he has chiseled away at our perceptions of a traditional string sound and arrived at a highly distilled and knottily expressive language.

Both written in 1992, *Verbal Showers* for violin and mixed ensemble and the second *Sing* Quartet are cut from the same cloth: The Quartet is especially light on its feet and never stands still for long as Dillon constantly nudges his material into new combinations of foot and scampering textures. It's often alleged that composers with a background in New Complexity can't hear what they write. That's not true here: Further from the truth is this case — Dillon's ear for beauty, rhythm and memorable sounds is masterful. *Verbal Showers* was commissioned by Holland's *New Ensemble* and grew out of Dillon's solo violin work *Del Cuvato Elemento*. Reflecting his fascination with the sound of 17th-century viol consorts, the work starts with a ghostly echo, as the violin is accompanied by the lower strings in a vibrato-less preamble. The unique instrumentation of the *New Ensemble* includes guitar, mandolin and harpsichord, out of which Dillon builds a labyrinthine landscape for *Verbal Showers*'s journey. As a momentary violin and harpsichord duo pokes out of the texture, descending torrents of notes orchestrated with the opaqueness of Ligeti dominate, while shimmering xylophone lines add yet more embellishment. This is a once in a lifetime piece. As Richard Toop points out in his notes, the violin duo has hardly distinguished itself in the history of Western classical music but Dillon's *Tuamneis* is an exception, revealing a more contemplative side. *Verbal Showers* is joined by Graeme Jennings for the 12 short and sometimes disconcertingly sparse sections of the work that build into an impressive and cohesive whole. The solo cello piece *Pajayara-wata* (1981) is a remarkably accomplished work from which many of the ideas in Dillon's later string pieces grew. Needless to say, Rohan De Saaram's performance is absolutely authoritative.

EARDRUM SIDE EFFECTS

LEAF MUSIC CO.
BY LOUISE GRAY

That much music produced in the studio is often simply about its own modes of production and procedures can be both a strength and weakness. But *Side Effects*, Eardrum's follow-up to *Last Light*, is one of those rare records that references a type of technology and expression that originates in alternative space. As an imaginatively constructed exposition of a relationship between machine-generated percussive power and a series of other rhythms — there's an upbeat impression on a kind of Fela Kuti Afrobeat — *Side Effects* garners its authority from its very lack of self-referential authority. Eardrum's core duo — Lolo Cicciotti and Richard Dandane Baker — are joined in this inventively misdirected enterprise by a gang of musicians who pool their experiences with, merrily, Alice, Spence and God. The album's opener, "Little Bang Theory," introduces a bit can rattle

that arranges itself into a rhythm. The loose confluence of sound sources and arrangements — from a combined set sound to vintage Moog moments — develop themes that resurface through other tracks. An inventive approach to rhythm — using a whole range of bells, talking drums and rebre tubes — ensures a continuity that's never threatened by *Side Effects*'s more improvised moments.

4 HERO CREATING PATTERNS

TALKIN' LOUD 588 0071/2 CD/LP
BY CLIVE BELL

Dolla Hill's Junglist pioneers are back with a generous, warm album, almost 80 minutes of cleverly programmed beats and lavish instrumentation. Moving along from drum 'n' bass, while remaining true to their own view of its ethic — it is there are no rules — *4Hero* have forged an impressive track record, which feels increasingly mature. And this time they should avoid the accusations of opining recorded, levelled at their last album, the Mercury-remastered and MDRO-winning *2 Pages*.

Personally, I find this maturity in itself a slight problem. This is a grown-up, sophisticated album, and contemporary soul in general takes sex so seriously. Several tracks remind me of Yoshimura's *Sinners* (Tokyo Underground Airport) or Nigo (Ape Sounds), but these are Japanese producers with their tongues firmly in their cheeks. On *Creating Patterns*, when Bernice Segoe sings, "A distant sound, I heard it blow my mind," she isn't joking. So get thee behind me, boy, this is a straightforward album. However and thankfully, neither is it a shiny, hollow soundtrack to urban posing and consumerist junkism. *4Hero* are audibly dedicated to musical excellence, and every track has had time and care lavished on it. Drum loops have been dried and suitified till they smell as lean as the surrounding orchestral work. There are strings everywhere, and so many lovely moments of imaginative arranging: check the chords behind singer Alma Horton on the chords of "Hold It Down." Or the backing vocals behind Jill Scott on "Another Day," or the cellos behind Terry Callier on "The Day Of The Goys." Electronics and live playing lovingly intertwine at all points, and there's a good balance between vocal tracks (Mark Murphy is also on board) and soundtrack, ra-jaaz instrumentation. *4Hero* may occasionally stray into amusing time signatures, but they afford many opportunities to jump up and down in the down. It's like *4Hero*.

The New Age lyrics and poems may grate on cynical ears, and the album places too much reliance on a four-bar descending chord sequence. But this is a rich, substantial piece of work, and if you've heard the single on the radio (to charming cover of Willie Robertson's "Les Fleurs") you may well enjoy the rest.

FREEFORM AUDIOTOURISM, ORIGINAL MUSIC, VIETNAM AND CHINA

QUATREMASS 9317 CD

BY DAVID TOOP

This is an album of recordings, collected by Simon Pike (aka Freeform) over a seven-month period in Vietnam and China, then painstakingly reconstructed into something closer to Pike's original template in the virtual space of a

software editing program like ProTools. For the owner, an understanding of this process is mediated by the cover design by The Designers Republic, who use maps, large trees and 19 photographs by Lo Scarfi as a way of projecting the listener into those environments experienced by the sound recorded. Scarfi's photographs are rather beautiful: the texture of Vietnamese mud bricks, hairy eggs on sale in Hanoi, rice paddies, China's Lugu Lake and the Cai Rang floating market in the Mekong Delta. They're the kind of photographs that make you want to be there yourself, yet say nothing about the relationship of the photographic medium (or the photographer) to its subjects.

This is also true for the sound of Pike's music. His source recordings are clear and rich, yet they possess no memory. This is deeply problematic, particularly in relation to a country like Vietnam where we had waste to memory. The instruments he has recorded are some of the most distinctive in the history of acoustic sound technology: the dan has microphoned and where mouth organ both emanate remarkable sounds and generate structures that are unique to the region. Music in Vietnam is as complicated as anywhere else — a mixture of folk forms peculiar to various ethnic minorities, some of which occupy parts of China, Laos and Thailand, along with whatever is left of a faded court tradition, various wild urban street musics (as documented on the wonderful *Ready Music* from Vietnam, released on "Island" in a few years back) and lots of external influences from Asia, Europe and the US.

You probably don't need to me to tell you that Simon Pike fans all of this complexity into hyperactive, ethnographic European machine music whose connections to its origins are as fugitive, obfuscated or hopelessly lost. With this issue of catastrophic cultural misunderstanding sold so fearfully at the centre of our collective attention at the moment, it's impossible to listen without paging at the implications of technological power embodied within this CD. This is not a simple question of cultural exchange: To hear Han's exquisite film *The Night of Summer* (see *Low Reed* notes more thoroughly) than I ever thought possible to map the lives of one family in Hanoi. It's a question of using one set of cultural values to add might to another. Pike's music is a few alien values in order to prove that computer editing can lead to impressively constructed simulations of life beyond verifiability. Such deceptions, usually justified by the "why not?" school of philosophy, also tend towards being fuzzy, alien, hypnotic, disoriented, restless, restless, technocratic, epicurean, shallow, complacent and ultimately meaningless music. For all its shortcomings, selling hairy eggs in a market is better than. Consuming music like this, on the other hand, is closer to death.

FURT ANGEL

JDK PRODUCTIONS 04 CD

BY PHILIP CLARK

Here's 12 minutes of noisy and enigmatic electronic music dedicated to the memory of the great Italian composer Luigi Nono. The sleeve tells us like that, except that *Furt* consists of the composer's little, banned and the electronic improviser Paul Dwyer, and Angel also treats sounds taken from saxophonist Tim Dwyer and

BYRDMAN

New World Music Releases



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GRATEFUL DEAD

THE GOLDEN ROAD (1965-1973)

(RHINO ENTERTAINMENT R274491 12XCD)

GRATEFUL DEAD

DICK'S PICKS 23: BALTIMORE CIVIC

CENTER 17/9/72

(GRATEFUL DEAD GDCD04043 2XCD)

"Boeing up The Grateful Dead? Do we bury them or cremate them?" OK, let's get the smirks over night away and then no more sniggering at the back. 15 and a half hours of The Dead? That's 1000 minutes in Sing Sing - life without parole. Eternity should be so long. They ain't Dead, they're just asleep. The ad says, there's nothing like a Dead concert. For that much we should be grateful. 15 hours Dead already? Yeah, I can smell 'em.

Well, bury them or burn them, The Dead just won't stay down. Such are the levels of toxicity irradiating the contents of *The Golden Road* - Rhino's handsomely mounted history of the group's uneasy, often fractious relationship with giant US entertainment conglomerate Warner Brothers - it should come in a lead lined casket sealed inside a concrete sarcophagus. For down in the vaults, The Dead's Warner Bros corpus went on proliferating: Each of their original nine releases - *The Grateful Dead*, *Anthem Of The Sun*, *Aoxomoxoa*, *Live/Dead* (a double LP), *Workingman's Dead*, *American Beauty*, *Grateful Dead aka Skullfuck* (another double), *Europe 72* (a triple) and *Bear's Choice* - has been dazzlingly remastered and expanded with alternate takes and live versions to fill the compact disc's capacity. A further double CD's worth of pre-Warner demos and live tracks document *The Birth Of The Dead*. Telling the first but inevitably most absorbing chapter of a story with a further 23 years on the dock, *The Golden Road* is a thrilling, sometimes terrifying hallucinatory odyssey through the heartlands of an America then conducting its unpopular war far away in Vietnam, while struggling to keep a lid on the turbulent changes and social unrest at home. So anybody signing on for the ride should take note: even as *The Grateful Dead* are held to symbolise all that was groovy and beautiful about 60s San Francisco flower power, their trip was decidedly not a *Discofied Alice* in Wonderland dream with a pretty face trim.

Ironically, the least "psychedelic" stuff here is the most dated. The early sessions and 1965 demos

making up disc one of the double *Birth Of The Dead* set, some recorded when they were still The Warlocks, is largely throwaway garage punk, albeit with a certain period charm. However, its sister live disc from 1966 captures The Dead in transition from ballroom blues outfit, with vocalist Ron "Pippen" McKernan to the fore, to guitar-driven acid breakers. Hearing them rave through "Viola Lee Blues", "I'm A King Bee" and "Big Boss Man", you can understand their disappointment with their Warner Brothers debut album, *Grateful Dead*. Now it is rescued with the bonus 23 minute live take of "Viola Lee Blues" (one of four included on *Golden Road*, which constitutes the set's first great act of lycergic alchemy. Snapping half a bar from the blues' usual 12 licks the performance into a precarious jimp motion, simultaneously pushing forward and pulling back, as the group jam down hard on its two chords.

Recorded at (and on) speed over three days, their debut was a true rarity for The Dead - an album delivered on time and within budget. Protected by an artistic freedom clause in their contract, they weren't about to be so accommodating to Warners with *Anthem Of The Sun* and *Aoxomoxoa*. Rather than attempting to recreate the full trip that was The Dead live back then, for Anthem they decided to studio-construct a sonic equivalent of the full-on acid rush. Treating live recordings as raw material, they overdubbed, stacked, layered, snipped, folded and tucked multiple takes of the same song into dense musique concrète towers. The trouble is, so many generations of sound were lost in the overdubbing process that on vinyl the power of the rush they were after comes over as somewhat muffled. In its digitally enhanced remastered form here, the sound loss has not been restored so much as transformed into a still inaudible but undeniably physical presence. When rhythm guitarist Bob Weir drove their Warner producer to resign by asking for "back air", you can finally feel what he means. The concrete effects and electronic treatments on *Aoxomoxoa* are rendered even spookier in its remastered form. Anthem has been expanded to include great live takes of "Alligator", "Caution" and "Born Cross-eyed", some of which formed the raw material for their studio experiments, while *Aoxomoxoa* is brought up to length with some studio jams, including the rarely heard "Darling Clementine" and "The Eleven".

Both albums sold poorly at the time and were largely

considered failures. Even if they fell short of their ambitions for them, they're The Dead's most intriguing studio creations. More valuable, however, are the lessons The Dead took from recording into their live performances, especially from Anthem. In concert, they accomplished their desire to keep the music in a state of constant flux and metamorphosis with song segues. On their greatest ever release, 1970's *Live/Dead*, they expanded the points of transition engineered on Anthem into lengthy, sustained explorations of space, exemplified, of course, by "Dark Star", where the interplay of guitarist Jerry Garcia's experiments with volume and feedback, Bob Weir's rhythm comps, and bassist Phil Lesh's black hole approach to timekeeping with drummers Bill Keutmann and Mickey Hart created fearful sonic backdrafts that roared and ripped through the jam's amebic structure.

The reconjuring and US roots-resuscitating post-Albarn albums *Workingman's Dead* and *American Beauty*, are immeasurably improved in these remasters, both decked out with bonus live cuts of the same. But the final three Warner sets, all of them live, were rendered somewhat obsolete by the compact disc format. They're fine songbooks, thrillingly played, and the extra Pippen tracks on *Europe 72* are especially poignant, given how they were recorded so close to his death from liver failure. Despite Pippen's absence - by now he was too ill to tour - the latest volume in The Dead's own-label Dick's Picks archive series is a far more rewarding way of experiencing the highs, lulls and lows of a Dead set than the cleaned up and studio-fixed *Europe 72*. Recorded in Baltimore in September of the same year, they take much of the first set mudding up to speed, but they hit form on Weir's "Playing In The Band", before surpassing themselves with an awe-inspiring 38 minute exploration of "The Other One", where they dissolve the joints they engineered so precisely on the Anthem original, transforming it into an ectoplasmic shimmer, held together by the luminous, jellyfish-like tendrils of notes gracefully unfurling from Garcia's guitar. Out of their depth they might have been with freaks like The Dead, but the suits at Warners got one thing right with the ad campaign that ran, "There's nothing like a Grateful Dead concert". It wasn't the label's fault that, when they had the group, the technology hadn't been developed to properly exploit the fact. □

Tuning into a 12 CD compendium of The Grateful Dead, Biba Kopf turns on to watch a rerun of the freaks taking on the suits at Warner Brothers



violinist Mary Oliver. Barnett recently described the evolution of Furt from a rather unmythical improvisation band that "played various kinds of instruments we found lying around; our aesthetic was not being able to play" to something more structured. Clearly the dedication to Nono is no mistake. Nono's late pieces such as the violin and electronic duo *La Contantezza* (Nostalgia Utopica Future) were written on the back of recorded improvisations and retained a controlled looseness, as the interaction between soloists and sound preceptorial determined the direction of the performance.

It's also possible, probable even, that the rather bleak, industrial electronic sounds Nono explored in early electronic pieces like *La Fabbrica Illuminata* and *Ricordo Cosa Ti Hanno Fatto in Auschwitz* have rubbed off on Barnett and Obermayer. Angel notes with similar surface ugliness and an ingrained, exultant pessimism — Barnett expects the audience in his ensemble piece *Opening Of The Mouth* to sit surrounded by the smell of rotten fish. Even as a whole, the constant changes of direction heard here build considerable impact and have genuine dramatic power. Focus in on isolated moments and I become less concerned about the rigor and quality of the material. The grey slabs of white scratchy noise and fatulent glissandi are perhaps incidental electronic favorites and could that curious recurring sound really be a pub peristaltic machine? Music to respect and admire rather than enjoy.

GODFLESH HYMNS

MUSIC FACTORY MFM271 CD

BY MIKE BARNES

Godflesh used drum machines at their inception back in the late 80s and have also experimented with the use of tape music, making it all grooves that techno Animal (the collaboration between guitarist Justin Broadrick and Kevin Martin) used as a blueprint pad for a succession of rappers on *Brotherhood Of The Bomb*. That album ended up as a chaotic, uneasy hybrid, but not so Hyms. Here Broadrick, co-founder bass player GC Green and former Prong drummer Ted Parsons, are once more concentrating their attentions on working with superheavy base metal.

The circular, almost Stogies-like riff of "For Life" succeeds precisely because it is so relentless, and "Karpis" and, with its flecks of melody and animated rhythms, approaches lift off. On "Archimedes", the guitar turns from sonic overload into uncaring lines and choppy washes. Although the majority of the music here is rhythmically tight, it also four square and Broadrick's feral barking adds an extra weight which threatens to collapse the entire structure.

There are only so many permutations of notes which can be made into a four bar riff, but on "White Flag" the group demonstrate their love of Black Sabbath by playing the second section of "Into the Void", and copping it even slower than the Sabs managed. Fear Factory intend to be ingested to Godflesh and one wonders how Hyms would have turned out with an injection of even a little of that group's dagger velocity. After such gloriously heavenly Broadrick's singing on "Ragga" comes as a shock; not only does it sound less cliché, it's positively passionate. On "Jesu", meanwhile, the celestial backing loops

add a welcome change of texture. Here Godflesh sound inspired, but overall the album engenders a feeling akin to watching a series of metal cutouts emerging from a car crusher.

HASIDIC NEW WAVE & YAKAR RHYTHMS FROM THE BELLY OF ABRAHAM KNITTING FACTORY KFW234 CD

BY BILL SHODENMAKER

Cultural assimilation is ultimately a two way street. In the short term, the music of minority communities must cross over into whatever the mainstream is perceived to be at any given moment to gain a wider audience. Over the long haul, though, it is the mainstream that is more fundamentally changed. The rise of World Music is the glaring case in point. Trumpeter Frank London and tenor saxophonist Greg Wall's *Hasidic New Wave* actively sidestep this process in their collaboration with Yakar Rhythms, a three man Sargolapian percussion ensemble led by Abrouse Faye. HWB's use of jazz, rock and their many hybrids as conduits for compositions steeped in koretz, freylachs and other forms of Jewish music is now simultaneously filtered through a sub-Saharan perspective.

The resulting palette has no dominant colour, yet the eight compositions flow effortlessly between the whiff of Jewish wedding music, the snap of Afro-pop, and the lingering smoke of jazz, often within the same tune. Credit the writing, which is all the more remarkable given that all the members of HWB (including guitarist David Fuczyrski, bassist Femi Ephoe and drummer Aaron Alexander) contributed at least one tune to this consistently engaging programme. Even when appropriating the 19th century Lubliner night singer (melody), "Femi Hasem", Alexander's use of a Lee Morgan/Wayne Shorter blend of the theme, giving him (highlighted by guest Jamie Saff's organ) and YK's contrasting sax rhythms thoroughly transforms the material.

In Fuczyrski, London and Wall, HWB also has a solid complement of versatile soloists, as equally fluent in mixing the cool groove of London's tangy minor blues variant, "Sea Of Reeds", as they are on Fuczyrski's feverishly paced "Frydnator", whose combination of Middle Eastern and West African flavours are comparable to romps by Pierre Dage and New Jungle Orchestra. London ranges from pinched muted nylon to sneaky wails, Wall is alternately subtle and searing; Fuczyrski can finesse a subtle line and wall-wh with abandon. At every turn, they are spiced by the exultant rhythms of Faye and his cohorts, Ousmane San and Abdoulaye Dipo.

NUSRAT FATEH ALI KHAN & PARTY BODY AND SOUL REAL WORLD RWW6 CD

BY CLIVE BELL

This is the great Sufi devotional singer at his best, a set of completely traditional qawwali performances recorded on home ground in Pakistan. Surrounded by his Party — harmonium, drums and supporting singers — Khan explores the tunes and then takes off into inspired vocal pyrotechnics. This album would be a reasonable starting point for a listener new to his passionate songs, which are always highly

rhythmic and involving.

These recordings are from Khan's personal archive in Lahore (he died in 1997), and are a second installation following on from last year's *Real World* release, *Oud To Gold*. Apparently a great deal of audio restoration was necessary before the tapes were up to scratch, but the results are excellent: warm and listenable, with the drums clear and clear underneath. There's no sign of an audience present, and no information about recording dates, but I would guess we are towards the end of Khan's career. An almost Danish grand in the grasp of his voice makes the music all the more moving when he breaks through to a new vocal plane. This is particularly the case to the fine opening track, "Mother, I Have To Go To Fend". Khan sings with the generosity that is sometimes the province of complete authority, and is supported by other voices, lighter, but still remarkable. The high pitched melisma and endlessly inventive ornamentation tumble forth in a manner European music hasn't heard for nearly a century.

RICHARD LAINHART TEN THOUSAND SHADES OF BLUE

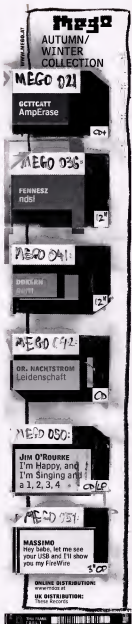
XI 115 2XCD

BY PHILIP CLARK

This survey of Richard Lainhart's music starts in the mid-70s with tape pieces that stretch minimal material over long durations, before moving to realtime electronic works composed a decade later and ending with an acoustic telephone solo that Gary Burton would be proud of. Lainhart describes how he grew up in the 1960s experimenting with the possibilities of composing on his father's reel-to-reel tape recorder. He discovered Moog synthesizers at the State University of New York at Albany and eventually left lessons from Jon Chiodo, who had worked with Bob Moog himself. Chiodo's idea of music as a process galvanised Lainhart and has obviously remained a benign influence.

Bronze Cloud *Osk*, *Two Mirrors Face One Another* and *Cities Of Light* were all composed before 1980 and come in at around the 40 minute mark. These pieces are a reflection of their times — the vocal harmonies of Stockhausen's *Stimmung*, the extended durations of Morton Feldman and the claustrophobic atmosphere of Kubrick's 2001 all spring to mind as reference points. Bronze Cloud *Osk* is Lainhart'sopus 1" and treats the dense and resonant overtones of a 28 inch tam-tam. It's a beautifully controlled and organised 32 minute drone in which the numerous overtones of the tam-tam drift in and out of focus. As the site suggests, there's a sense of dialogue in *Two Mirrors Face One Another*. Using the sounds of six Japanese temple blocks, the piece is reminiscent of the ebb and flows of letter day Feldman and as Lainhart says, the piece has its own "sacred chime".

Cities Of Light begins where *Stimmung* ends. The piece is based on the same multiphonic vocal technique of producing a low fundamental and adjusting the vocal chords to produce a range of high overtones. Here Lainhart has untruncated eight layers of his own voice and the expressive effects are very potent. The piece would be epic if its material wasn't so whittled down, and the tape dolls the overly human touches — an interesting set of contradictions.



Place your bets: Le Tigre's rabblerrousing second album is odds-on favourite to reawaken Riot Grrrl's revolutionary spirit.
By Anne Hilde Neset



Viewed up close: JD Sampson, Kathleen Hanna and Johanna Fateman

LE TIGRE FEMINIST SWEEPSTAKES

CHICKS ON SPEED CD5953 CD

"I don't want to be part of your revolution if I can't dance," women's rights activist and Russian born anarchist 'Red' Emma Goldman vowed in the early 1900s. Nearly a century later, with feminism now surfing its third wave, New York based Grrrl trio Le Tigre may well have Goldman doing the mashed potato in her grave. Lying somewhere between Cibo Matto, The Fall and X-Ray Spex, their fizzy, cocksure electro-punk takes on gender politics to speak for a whole generation of vigorous viragos.

Feminist Sweepstakes's 13 tracks are collaborative efforts, with everyone's fingers stuck in everyone else's pie. Though nominally a punk trio, Kathleen Hanna, Johanna Fateman and JD Sampson rely heavily on samplers and drum machines, and constantly switch instrumental and vocal tasks. Ex-Bikini Kill singer Hanna has been an iconic presence in the underground for some time now. With her 1992 hit "Rebel Girl", she became Riot Grrrl's troupe leader and reluctant spokeswoman alongside Sonic Youth's Kim Gordon. But after a while Bikini Kill's minimal punk format could no longer accommodate her ideas, prompting her to invent Julie Ruin as a 1996 solo project. After recruiting writer Joanna Fateman (sample zine: *My Need To Speak On The Subject Of Jackson Pollock*) and visual artist/Powervision pioneer Sadie Benning (sample video: *Rat Is Beautiful*), her brand new trio quickly evolved into a three-headed beast which they christened Le Tigre, after the

clothing line that knocks off cheap imitations of Rod Lacoste's crocodile preppy shirts. Even though Le Tigrewear is doubly desirable in today's 'ironic' fashion climate, their appropriation of the brand underlines the trio's low-rid, in-the-know approach. They released their debut album *Le Tigre* in 1999 on Mr Lady Records And Video, a lesbian-run record label and distribution network in North Carolina co-run by The Butches' Kaia Wilson. With hits like "What's Yr Take On Cassavetes" and "Hot Topic", a re-echo of the group's favourite feminists, Le Tigre provided instant anthems for their target audience of politicised and attitude-studded girls. Shortly after its release, Sadie Benning left to concentrate on her career as an independent video artist, and was replaced by JD Sampson.

Though Feminist Sweepstakes builds on the trio's individual legacies of Riot Grrrl and queerbore, Le Tigre are not so much interested in romanticising their recent past as locating themselves at the heart of a growing network of female musicians. Indeed, they happily wear their affinities on their album sleeve, where they namecheck a range of artists as diverse as Electrelane, Peaches, The Need, Tribe B, Missey Elliott and new label bosses Chicks On Speed.

Constructed around the phrase "50 Years of Ridicule", first voiced in Redstockings member Shulamith Firestone's 70s radical feminist classic, *The Dialectics Of Sex*, the song "FYR" complains of "Ten short years of progressive change/50 fucking years of calling us names", before opening their recruitment drive with the lines, "Feminists we're calling you/Please

report to the front desk/Let's name this phenomenon/It's too dumb to bring us down".

Just to prove they're no musos, they spatter "LT Tour Theme" with a lengthy Metal guitar lick overlaid with the girls' laughter. Apparently this results from a trip to the guitar shop, where they picked up the first unsuspecting Eddie Van Halen wannabe they came across and invited him in to record some masturbatory guitar abuse. But Le Tigre make it clear they're equally unimpressed by electronica's nerdboy constituency. "For the ladies and the fags yeah/We're the band with the roller skate jams" declare Fateman and Sampson. "You know the guys with the digicameras/Push to the front and then they just stand there/But then I see the girls walking towards the dancefloor/And we remember why we go on tour".

Not content with cleaning up in the feminist sweepstakes, the trio are already hard at work on solo projects. Hanna's voice can be heard guesting with Playgroup, Trevor Jackson's electro-disco project on the Output label; Fateman's *Swim With The Dolphins* have a track on Kid606's *TigerbeatINC* compilation; and Sampson's *Dykes Can Dance* troupe might well be staging a choreographed intervention at a lesbian bar or club near you very soon.

For the present, anyone buying into Feminist Sweepstakes is backing a winner. Its infusion of HipHop drum programs, Old Skool electronics, rabblerrousing calls-to-arms and repetitive guitar riffs is highly addictive. Just one taste is all it takes to get you started; the trouble is, once tasted, you can't get enough of it.

However in the 80s, Lanthier did want his music to be more spontaneous and performed live. Field became interested as a listener and performer in the cut and thrust of small group jazz (Dave Ellington and Rick Beidenbeck in particular) and was exploring technology that allowed real-time transformation of electronic sound. Despite the advanced technology and jazz jargon, I find the pieces far less convincing. *Mr. Thousand*, *Shades Of Blue* and *Staring At The Moon* are much shorter than their predecessors and fail to make that all important leap from being sound effects to becoming a living and breathing sound object. However, the vibraphone work *Walking Slowly* towards a theme itself and this double CD set can be heartily recommended on the considerable strengths of the first three works alone.

**CHRIS MCGREGOR'S
BROTHERHOOD OF BREATH
TRAVELLING SOMEWHERE**
CHINESE-IRISH-INDIAN-USA, 00

This 26-year-old, live recording from the vaults of Radio Bremen magnificently demonstrates the joyous, aristocratic and nearly uncontrollable not that was The Brotherhood Of Breath. Held in total affection by all who saw them, The Brotherhood was constructed from Chris McGregor's band of South Africans, The Blue Notes, and the cream of the British avant garde. They were hugely influential and musically explosive but financially challenged. And they're desperately missed.

The combination of McGregor (struggling with and brilliantly subduing an out of tune piano) and Louis Moholo on drums from the original Blue Notes, plus Harry Miller on bass, is as strong and uncompromising a rhythm section as it was possible to get in 1973. The injection of Dudu Pukwana on alto and Mongezi Feza on trumpet into the front line with Harry Becker and Marc Chang (trumpets), Nick Evans and Malcolm Griffin (trombones), Mike Odimeko (alto), and Parker (sopping for Alan Sidmore on tenor) and Gary Windo (tenor) made this train unstoppable.

The album is a combination of light and timely heads, inane yet brave free seeking and improvised ensemble fits that leave you yearning for joy. McGregor was a brilliant arranger with a sophisticated ear. But he also possessed a total understanding of band structure and dynamics, when to give a player his head and when to sign in and lighten up. The result is not one wasted note, never a full moment and never a woolly or mauling sentiment. It's unfair to single out players in an ensemble of this quality but Moholo is also quicksilver throughout. Feza's trumpet solos still unequalled for prodigious insouciance, and Dudu Pukwana never came from this planet anyway — he must have been Sam Rai's natural globe-trotting companion. The effect of The Brotherhood Of Breath remains undiminished.

NATHANIEL MERRIWEATHER
LOVAGE: MUSIC TO MAKE LOVE
TO YOUR OLD LADY BY

Lowage is the latest sonic adventure from Oan 'The Automator' Nakamura, the audio director behind modern classics like *Or Octagon's* Octadovecokeyist, *Deltron 3030* and *Gonilaz*.

Joining the San Francisco producer, who uses his Northern Hemisphere alias first developed on Handstone Play Modeling School's So, How's Your Girl, are Jonathan Chaves and Mike Patton, who are just as turntableist and partner in crime Id Noia. Patton aims in his infamously elastic vocals, usually unleashed on projects such as Mr Bungle and Fantomas, to a growing, seared up bantone and a throaty wail recognisable from time spent as front man for Faith No More. Meanwhile, Chavis's own work as lead singer for moody rock outfit Elipsian Films mirrors Louie's formula for atmospherically romantic downpours. Regardless of their strengths, the two musicians, along with a gallery of guests (Africa Bambaataa, Damon Albarn), are true actors in the Automator's producers, which are the musical equivalents of the Coen Brothers films, where the same participants seem to appear, just in different roles.

Superficially, *Lounge* is a continuation of the Handsome Boy Modeling School aesthetic that collides Hip-hop, rock and electronics into an ironic hipster epic. At times, *Lounge* really does sound like a cheesy 70s soft rock epic. A few dark instrumental interludes could be abstracted from the Automator's mid-90s LP, *I Am a Better Tomorrow*, and the handful of singles, particularly "Surrender's" become a little reminiscent on "Hate, Grief, and And So" and "The End of the Beginning," respectively. But the Automator's beats, EQ'd to perfection, and Patton and Charles's gushy moans and exhortations quickly dispel the clouds. Over the years the Automator's work has grown less hospitable to the aural voyeur. They are either/or propositions. *Gonlar* were a big international hit this year for those who thrived to their animated pop dreams and anorexia to their nihilistic, nihilistic, nihilistic and nihilistic. So, *Lounge* is a cleverly constructed, if less artistically compromised, and pleasantly monoaural.

**MINOTAUR SHOCK
CHIFF-CHAFFS & WILLOW
WARBLERS**
MFL CDAC MFL 0008 CD4 P

BY JOHN MULVEY

An album predicated on ornithology? Initially, at least, the debut album by Bristolian David Edwards suggests electronica's penchant this year for frolicking in virtual meadows may have gone too far. And certainly, that title and some decidedly pretty parts of *Chiv! Chiv! and Willow Warblers* hint at an eclecticism beyond the work of Edwards's contemporaries *Four Tet* and *Boards of Canada*.

After Kid606's brutal dismissal of electronic music that seeks to pacify rather than challenge in *The Wire* 212, one feels fairly guilty at championing such verand, unashamedly lovely sound designs as these. But does aestheticism necessarily signify an abdication of radical responsibility? And aren't splatted beats and punk rock attitude often just as predictable, their sensationalist potential depleted by their very desire to shock?

In the hands of Minotaur Shock, the revolt into gentility continues apace. In the context of so much dysfunctionality, the likes of "Local Violin Shop" and "First to Back Down" — all rustled beats, piano flumes, and processed plucks — have as much pleasingly subversive impact as a watercolours winner: the Turner Prize. Likewise

"Moray Arrive!", which priches a drunk trumpet and some steel drums into an unsteady computer environment with the clownish gale of Weston Chest.

Much here, from the scrupulously adjusted guitar samples to the bird drawings on the sleeve, make it easy to assume *Minority Shock* dabbles in a quintessentially British field, fiddling with tradition. But gradually, other allegiances emerge: a strong bond with the infantilised, tweaked electro pop prevalent on Berlin's Mott Music label, or the crooked music box charm of the Icelandic group Múm. A little sugary for some tastes, perhaps, but often rather beautiful.

NOBLE/EDWARDS/WARD
FALSE FACE SOCIETY

IN HIS EARLY DAYS
BY BARRY WINTERSTEIN

In his early teens Alex Ward won an award for his performance of the claret part in Messiaen's *Quatuor Pour La Fin Du Temps*, made his mark on the international improv stage as part of the 1988 Company Week, out a superb duo album with Steve Noble, then, at 17, seemed to fade from the national scene. In the mid-90s he re-emerged as part of XIII Ghosts, releasing two intriguing albums, *Ghosts Replicates Destructive Beam* and *Legend Of The Blood Met*. Earlier this year he appeared on marvellous duo with Derek Bailey and now craps up again on this October 2000 session, but on guitar. He proves that, as well as an imaginative, individual improviser on reeds and woodwind, he is a powerful guitarist.

Noble debated at Company Week the year before Ward, consolidating the impression made with some well respected dose sessions with pianist Alex Maguin. On this CD he engages the very different musical demeanor Ward adopts with comparable success, imagination and power. John Edwards also plays magnificently throughout. Sometimes it's difficult to believe his part was not recorded at half speed: never mind the pitch, cop the articulation. At all times he drives the music forward, whether with percussive torrents of single notes, plump parades of leaping post-bop lines or ferocious post-Garrison strumming—a technique which drops up with notable effectiveness on "Rickstar" tapes, set against Ward's acidic chattering figures. As the texture thickens and the pace quickens he reaches into the cells register, then, around halfway through, precipitates a lurch into a splendid sneaky neo-boppy passage. On "Slow Nights" he explores both extremes of the band's range, and in "The Place Where It's Good" to determine which instrument is doing what. More so than usual, the trio transmutates into a genuinely homogeneous entity rather than a inertial coalition. There are episodes of postfolk/specialist/resonance-weighting/harmonics-dynmic reflection, but instead it goes straight for the throat.

MICHAEL NYMAN
FILM MUSIC 1980-2001

BY PHILIP SHERBURNE

Tigerbeat6



Wrong Application ed
that, under electric company
arrangements, it is required
to pay more than it should.



KNIFEHANDCHOP

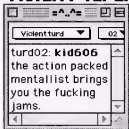


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comparison two "2"

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Violent turd!



kid606 cd/17"

all new slapping material—shake that ass



freaky comp of exclusive new tracks by kid666,max tundra,mortal and chemist
kevin blechdom,kid666,posterboys of the
apocalypse



best material here is exemplary film music and rather charming. Some of it is boring, much of it is dull, and the conclusion that the recent material leaves of a composer now making more money than music is hard to escape. And, yes, the score for *The Piano* really is as garish and tacky as you remember from the cinema.

Nyman's gift for injecting his music into the highly embellished, stylised ceremony of Peter Greenaway's films always showed him at his best. His highly personal reworking of baroque models has exactly the right tone for *The Draughtsmen's Contract*, marionette both Greenaway's blurring of the ordinary and his curiously contemporary spin on 18th century protocol. His score for Greenaway's 1985 *A Zed and Two Nothings* contains some genuinely dazzling music: "Angelish Delux" and "Time Lapse" feel like Henry Purcell refracted through cinematic stoppings and speeding-up processes and are played with extraordinary gusto by the Nyman Band. The concentration in his orchestration on impossibly high soprano sassephone parts, weird low contrabass clarinet (I think) lines topped off with a chugging harpsichord and doo-doo strings sounds like nothing else, creating a unique atmosphere.

The problem is, take the film away and all you're left with is atmosphere. The music doesn't have the gravitas to stand on its own for long. The three or four minute bursts that make sense in the film become interchangeable when listened to as music; and soon the unadulterated silliness of the music becomes refracting. The music for *The Piano*, *Wonderland* and *The End Of The Affair* are the result of a man using his technique to write formulaic music by the yard. It's bland, conformist trash and shows how for Neyman has travelled from the man who wrote *Experimental Music And Beyond*. Presumably this is the Beyond.

**EVAN PARKER &
PETER A SCHMID**
SEPTEMBER DUOS
CREATIVE WORKS RECORDS CWR1096 CD

**ANLIKER/PARKER/SCHMID/
SENN/SOLOTHURNMANN**
SEPTEMBER WINDS

CREATIVE WORKS CWN008/39 2XCD
BY JOHN CRATCHLEY

The connection between sound and manmade spaces or the synergy between music and architecture has forged some evocatively enduring images: Sonny Rollins practising on the Williamsburg Bridge, The Beatles' rooftop recording session, Stephan Micus's vibrating stone blocks in Ulm Cathedral, or Stockhausen's Helikopter string quartet. The seemingly disparate elements comprising these events appear to imitate, forming one structure. They were surely made for each other.

Consider the relationship, a mute partner, instead an articulate presence projects sound into or onto it, exploring its oblique recesses, flowing across and over its uneven surfaces, throwing back unpredictable, inconsistent sonorities that demand equally reactive responses. This is as near as it gets to free improv heaven. So, the utilisation of an abandoned underground water claim just outside Zurich (built in 1922 and unused for nearly 30 years) by musicians with an unquenchable thirst for exploring boundaries and of the intuitive powers of Evan Parker and

Peter A. Schmid should come as no surprise.

The other obvious point of contact would be the deep listening music of Pauline Oliveros recorded in similar subterranean surroundings, both utilising the environment to produce acoustic ambience of the highest order in Zuno the space is embraced as a partner, its character savoured and its replies respected, rather than as an inanimate artefact to be probed and dissected. Consequently these recordings have warmth and intimacy regardless of the fact that the sound produced is full of cavernous depth and distance.

The tones from Parker's tenor and soprano saxos and Schmid's clannets on the duo recording manage to define the parameters of the space in sound. This is an amazing feat of acute musical sensitivity. Vibrations are literally given room to breathe. They flow across and around the space, bouncing back transformed and mutated, split and reconstituted, mapping out its size and shape.

The second double disc set broadens the palette by adding Hans Arniker (trombone), Reto Senn (drumset) and Jürg Solothurnsarn (alto/soprano sax) in various combinations. Again, the architecture is given equal prominence despite the obvious increase in density produced by the larger group. The building is equal to the additional responsibility. These discs have a more menacing feel to places (especially the hour long piece on disc two) due mainly to the centrifugation and vying for space that swollen numbers produce. The harsher brass tones of Arniker elicit a more impactive response and sounds are returned with a percussive insistence that adds complexity to the event.

Yet the ability to breathe life into this forgotten piece of Bauhaus concrete at the hands of some master builders is without precedent. You can hear surfaces absorbing as well as rebounding sounds and making independent choices. This is acoustic sound manipulation and processing in real time. Play this music in conjunction with Evan Parker's electroacoustic ensemble disc *Rewards The Margin* (influenced by architectural visionary Buckminster Fuller) to get a feel for its electronic counterpart and the achievements of these two albums become acutely focused.

**MARK PAULINE +
GX JUPITTER-LARSEN**
SURVIVAL RESEARCH
LABORATORIES
SUB ROSA SR177 CD
BY EDMAN BOUNCEY

Survival Research Laboratories was founded in 1978 by California rocketeer Mark Pauline as a portable, evolving, mechanical masterpiece constructed out of metal, flesh, electronics and rocket weaponry that argued his existence to "state control of the very violence that characterized the age we live in." SRL stage their explosive gladiatorial riot war spectacles in deserts, highway tracks and arenas across the globe. Hideous moments made from dead animal parts, discarded mannequins and machinery roll out to attack each other, only to be eventually blown up to GI requirements. A SRL event is the greatest and most dangerous art show on earth. They once famously had the whole of Australia on alert in 1992 when a performance in Gilek was mistaken for a Sarin

invasion, Paine wasn't kidding when he said this wasn't just art, this was total war. GX Jupiter-Larsen is a noise musician who also enjoys using heavy equipment to get his message across. His group The Haters, together with 'electro-verserican' Greg Leyh, once employed a giant ion gun to send a 5000 volt static charge through their audience. Similar shock tactics from newly appointed SRL chief sound engineer Jupiter-Larsen and Leyh have been incorporated into more recent SRL extravaganzas, where noise and electricity are an added element of theatrical threat.

These (baffle) field recordings, taken from various 90s SRL shows, can only hint at the surreal, industrialised mayhem and destruction that actually took place. While its sound shards will mainly appeal to fans of Meow and early Einstürzende Neubauten, this document goes beyond the noise threshold, bordering on the dark side of psychedelic meltdown.

Kicking off with an excerpt from the notorious Gox show, the combined fire power of Pauline's robotic war machines and Jupiter-Larsen's electro-noise bomb rocks out with a cacophonous symphony of machine greed into which the innocent squeal of a cartoon soundtrack loop has been forced like a pet rabbit to Gollums. More terrifying is "March 28, 1997" where SRL add pre-recorded auto race and car crash sounds into the metal mix to produce a sub-Batman ballet of burning chrome and amplified death rattle, complete with a speaker rattling aftershock. Best of all, however, is "May 28, 1994," which combines all these elements to fling open the black iron furnace doors to SRL's hellish world and send you to

MARCELO RADULOVICH
[CASE OF THE MISSING]
THUMB

ADDITIONS ALP23 CID

BY THE DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL

Marcus Radułowicz is a San Diego based musician, performer and sound artist, as well as a co-founder of the Thummersfora Collective, a Southern California group dedicated to experimental and improvised music (see Global East, The Wire 2016) *Case Of The Missing Thummers* 'phonographs', or field recordings, with treated tapes of analogue synthesizer music recorded on a boombox some 16 years ago. The result is not the documentary sound typical of phonography artists, but rather a fluid and impressionistic Ambient composition rich with environmental overtones. The dense swirl of sound approximates a dream that yields only clues with no clear referent: swirling water, footsteps, voices of voices, barges of bells. Pledant harmonies fold in upon themselves, collapsing into black hole drones or metallic diaphanities. The title, which alludes to a spoken word fragment at one point, adds to the air of mystery while the Band of voices in Spanish, English and other undistinguishable tongues suggests a restless wandering. Wires and sounds of native clays and brasses can run alongside clays of New England, and the clanging of a cello, paired with noise and unsteady melodic figures they escape usual cone correlations. A third of the way through, the music falls away, leaving as the only audible element an apparent explosion of fireworks, and the shouting of voices at close range. With Radułowicz's art assumed to such

[illegible]

Soundcheck

moments, Thumb comes over like a fantastic twinkle, elusive — and elusive — in the same manner as Chris Maker's Surfact.

REHBERG & BAUER

PASST
TOUCH TONES CD
BY JEROME MAUNSELL

This offering from the bosses of Vienna's Mego label — Peter Rehberg aka Pita and General Mago's Ramon Bauer — is the final installment in a trilogy of Powerbook Improv error-electronic releases on the Touch imprint, following *Fasst* (1997) and *Bait* (1999). With laptop gidge whumpings becoming alarmingly commonplace, the latest dispatch from its pioneers is a more than welcome wake-up call to the legends of digital coyotes out there.

Dividing 13 tracks across the four 'movements' (for want of a better word) named on the sleeve, *Passt* was edited in Vienna from original recordings made of three gigs in Sydney and Melbourne at the start of last year. The live factor is clear right from the start, as the disc opens with an overcast Aussie emcee introducing the duo, whooping and shrieking away. It's a gloriously incongruous way to begin a CD containing that trademark githronic click pulse, but the joke wears on so repeated listens. Your intention is likely to be obliterated soon enough, however, as the minimal beats are overwhelmed by a blast of full-on digital noise that slowly sculpts itself into something assembling the rhythmic clug of an outboard motor or heavy rounds of artillery fire.

Yet *Passt* isn't just sonic apocalypse and ultrasonics, with the narrative tension never letting up. It's like some kind of post-hoc equivalent of the Qui mix CD. *Passt* beats and

flows with an unusually satisfying sense of timing. Sounds are ruthlessly controlled, taut and precise. Skittering landscapes of prickly digipose and metallic shades of sound give way to soft pulses and aquatic clicks and pops, flicking high-frequency tones wave around subtle bass rumbles. The high point comes about halfway through "Reverber," when a lunately rifting Speed Metal guitar joins the fray, panning around the soundfield exactly like a caged tiger. It's a belated effort of anachronistic electronic energy, and a triumphant finale to this landmark trilogy.

ZOOT HORN ROLLO WE SAW A BORN UNDER THE SEA

ZHR ZH12001 CD
BY EDWIN POUNCEY

Quintest Zoot Horn Rollo (aka Bill Harkness) will forever be recognised for the 'long lunar notes' he applied to the abstract sound canvas of Captain Beefheart's Magic Band. His story during that period has been told many times, and Reverent's recent *Grow Pins* box set has further focused attention on his Magic Band work, but his post-Beefheart career, as leader of Malind for example, has been all but ignored. Here he bounds back with a solid instrumental album distributed on his own Internet label, ZHR.

These escaping a flashback to his Beefheart period, however, will be disappointed. With a group made up of these guitarists Dave Lucas and Mark Schneider, saxophonist Owe O'lois, violinist Brian Price, harmonica player John Proulx and percussionists/vibes maestro Gregg Berdian, Harkness blends the strings of his magical electric guitar into numerous musical forms, with a heavy emphasis on modern jazz. This fuselised blending of late 60s Miles Davis

and John Coltrane — together with an atomised whiff of Zoot Alices era Frank Zappa — rears up seen after the opening "Gut A Bizz Ar," which is exactly the kind of desert blues basted rock impulse that ZHR devotees were probably hoping for. That the remainder of the record seems to play itself should not detract anyone from what he and his guitar have to say. The raw spirit of Harkness's jazz style is no mere artistic fancy or pretense. Indeed, it comes straight from the gut, delivered with a beatty conviction and attention to detail. Now that he has shrugged the burden of his past, the return of Zoot Horn Rollo is a cause for celebration.

KEITH ROWE & TOSHIMARU NAKAMURA WEATHER SKY

ERSTWHILE 018 CD
BY DAVID TOPP

Minimalism, there's a lot of it about. Tomsonet Rade Malin's had some interesting points to make on the subject in *The We 211*. I tend to associate Malin with steamy nights at the 100 Club in the early 1970s, Brotherhood Of Breath on the rampage. Malin now feels that improvisation is locked into its own repertoire of gestures and reduces his level of action to the bare minimum to find alternative strategies.

Keith Rowe has always been a 'lur' player in his solo work that's always something happening — a burst of short wave radio, a drone, a conglomerate of resistive sounds — but this new release suggests a desire to distill this activity. On *Weather Sky*, the constancy remains but dynamic levels are reduced and flattened. The 'lur' in which sound motion occurs is shifted to an unfamiliar level. Listen very carefully, as headphones in a silent environment,

for example, and the contrasts are just as marked as they always were. Unfortunately, I hate the discomfort of headphones, the sense of enclosure and detachment and as for the silent environment, I can only dream about that.

Is a guitar present? Again, by listening carefully, one distinctive relationship between pickup, string, amplifier, loudspeaker, human body and ancillary implements can be recognised, just. Really, it doesn't seem to matter that much anyone in terms of technology. I imagine Toshimaru Nakamura's contribution as a cluster of jets, all of them streaming with jets of water distinguished by slight variations in velocity and texture.

Hum is important — heard when most of the foreground elements drop away. The phenomenon that technicians of the analogue world struggled to eliminate for decades. The phenomenon that a digital tool can eliminate in seconds, 'intelligently', is now given its own rightful place in the sound field. Yet Hum is simply a word that describes our categorisation of desirable and undesirable sustained pitches of a certain frequency. Drifter switches and neon tubes, for example, Hum. Do they make noise? They make a sound that might be mistaken for music like this and passers a certain appeal in their own right, when you're in the right frame of mind, but what is miraculous about *Weather Sky* and not at all miraculous about drifter switches and neon tubes is the meticulously distilled, highly mobile and unpredictable interaction of sounds that could be confused with the ambient sounds of a contemporary interior.

In other words, the human element is opposed to the kettle element. The relationship between players in improvised music have

Size Matters 3", 7", 10" and other misshapes

Miguel Algarin is one of the lions of the so-called Nuyorican poetry movement. **Edwin Torres** is one of its most fractured proponents. **Seem Meehan** is one of the best, though least documented, avant garde percussionists around. On *She/Equinival Kiss* (Tunt 1717) the three of them entered the studio with their respective weapons and, uh, 'let one fly.' The results are as sparse and brilliant as you might hope. Meehan is a king of small gestures and smears. Algarin waxes epic, and Torres gobbles like a man in a raincoat that is far too tight.

Having never heard the first volume of *The New Immortality* (from 1992), it is difficult to make a comparison with **Left Efferie** (FER10117). However, the source material for this new one is, in its entirety, the old one, so I guess it'll have to speak for itself. Algarin held the record in his hand and shouted, hoping that the needle would pick up the vibrations of his voice. And it seems to have. At least it picked up something, in a way, though, it mostly sounds like either some of those 'heavy chick'

points where it sounds as though construction detritus (in addition to the omnipresent industrial fan) is allowed to enter the picture, but the specifics aren't as clear as that. Nor should they be.

Microverse Wallpaper/Deep Blue Gazer (20 City 2008 7") by the esoteric Durren noise barone, **Sandoz Lab Technicians**, shows them at their most demotic. Some parts are pleasant little accretions of acoustic guitar and gentle whooshing, which are allowed to cohere for brief bits before they're walked into the ether by jets released by cartoon chipmunks. Other bits are percussion thrills that may well be similar to the final dream of Steve Peregrine took. This group presents so many flows that it's hard to become acquainted with them all, yet it's equally impossible to not want to.

Selovers is a Japanese sound artist with previous releases on the Meme, Igneous and American Tapes labels. As with those, *Now Heres* (20 City 2007 7") is a piece of sonic work so subtle as to be almost non-existent. The sources are presumed to be electronic, but the actual sound on the first side is probably akin to what a lactus hears when its mother is sleeping very close to a radiator full of fish. The second side is more like that same lactus doing an error subway car through a tunnel of buzzing fluorescent lights. Nice trip.

Colin Kuwayama Kijiharu and violinist **Kijiharu** have previously issued a very fine and fiery *Improv CD* on the Japanese G5 label. The duo set, *00/10/176 & 00/10/176* (20 City 20010 7"), recorded at construction field of the 'expressway', is less strident than their earlier work, but just as fully packed. The celo sets up a swayed base upon which the violin weaves like a drunk and fast mouthed angel. There are certain

Nick/Bottle Test (Hanning Beaver FB-05 8") is more mysterious than from the American Midwest. It's hard to know how many people are involved with the project or what they might be doing. For "Tedd" the sounds are primarily electronic with pulsing waves of menace, oscillator lines and looped/trailed what not spinning around slowly in a dark room. "Bottle Test" is a bit more like a song, with indecipherable vocals thrumming along to something reminiscent of early David Verbeaux at his most dippy.

Galleries 4-6 (20 City NO NUMBER 3X107) is the second entry in 20 City's gallery series and is just beautiful. The disks are packed in a textured envelope and present three excellent slabs from the NZ cire underground. *Dee were* once known as Three, and their drone is in with bass and slowly building, accumulating energy flares and visual interest as it unfolds into a perfect mist. *Joe Steel* is a solo project by expatriate New Zealander Richard Francis. He leaves his drone down with little squeaks of the feedback tube, and showens of hot metal ure. **Bichelle Cat Motel** are well known compositional anarchists with a host of recordings behind them. Yet even they have a field of drone-in surface here, allowing their amplifiers and electrified tongues to speak eternally in lines of the straight line. And that's worth hearing! □ Reviewed by Byron Coley

changed. Having begun very hot in the free jazz days, they are cooling rapidly and threaten to reach least levels. Keith Rowe's cover painting depicts an ice bar, which may be a coded reference to this trend. I think this may be a reflection of shifts in social relations, though not necessarily an indication of a lessening of listening abilities or interactive sophistication.

Neither does it have to reflect the temperament of the music itself. Weather Sky is divided into three tracks, two long, one short, and I have to admit that by the thirteenth minute of "Weather Sky III" the steeply climbing intensity tends to get the better of me. These are intense, disturbing, intense times. As good as I think this album is, it's not what I want to listen to when the world is sliding towards dormancy or its secular equivalent. That's hardly the fault of Rowe and Nakamura. They recorded this music in 11 June, rather than 11 September: it's not that wild either. Crisis are not immune to time beyond CDs.

STEFANO SCODANIBBIO SIX DUOS

NEW ALBION 113 CD

BY JULIAN COWLEY

John Cage was amazed when he heard the "really extraordinary" bassist Stefano Scodanibbio. In the sleeveless, Terry Riley, who collaborated with the Italian virtuoso on *Late Afternoon Among The Frenchies*, tells how he "heard the sounds of French horns, trombones, strings and brass all mingling in a beautiful modal ensemble", and found it was Scodanibbio playing solo. The bassist was admired by Luigi Nono and has had works written for him by Brian Ferry, though, Larus Nenske and Vinko Globokar. With those credentials you expect something special from Scodanibbio's own compositions, and on *Six Duos* you get it.

His creative friendship with another composer, the mystical reader Giacomo Scelsi, offers a clue to the nature of Scodanibbio's magic. Scelsi was bewitched by the vibrant inner life of sounds and wrote music that reconciled molecular dynamism with apparent stasis, frenetic activity with surface solidity. Of all musicians, double bassists must surely be most immediately aware of the vibrational nature of sound and of its fundamental continuity with other energy forms.

In Scodanibbio's music crystalline clarity (served perfectly by New Albion's characteristically impeccable production qualities) is allied with spectrographic rigour as he splinters out harmonics with pinpoint precision. For the premiere recording of these exercises in radiant accuracy he is joined by three members of the Arditi String Quartet—colin Rohan De Saran, wicket Dou Schwinden and violinist Irina Dorian. They are ideal partners because they have encountered Scodanibbio in various playing contexts since the mid-1980s and have been tempered to meet the stringent demands his own performance imposes. The best duets with each of the others: Arditi's violin is coupled additionally with viola and cello, and De Saran and Scheindin form the other pairing.

Six duos pieces in which instrumental lines intertwine like tendrils of differing thickness, tangling when registers coincide, converging in clustered effluence. They acknowledge family resemblances but highlight the dramatic tensions of difference as well as affinity. This is complex music that makes a direct impact.

through its singular combination of tenderness and strength, transcendence and density. Sustained brilliance of a rare order.

SUN RA & HENRY DUMAS THE ARK AND THE ANKH

REF KAPOZ CD

BY EDWIN POUNCEY

This obscure spoken word document is a tete à tete between two great minds of the mid-60s. Sun Ra has been recognised as an important musician, band leader and poet whose cosmic interpretations and meditations on jazz and black history resound louder now than when he was on Planet Earth. Henry (aka Hank, sometimes spelled 'Ankh') Dumas was a poet, storyteller and activist whose work has been highly praised by Amiri Baraka, Dumas and Ra came together while both were living in New York, often frequenting the legendary downtown club Space Station where Sun Ra and his Arkestra regularly performed. Finding himself irresistibly drawn to Ra, as their friendship deepened, the poet began to record their conversations that led directly to the heart and art of Ra and his Arkestra. Sun Ra was shocked, saddened and angered to hear that on 23 May 1968 his friend had been shot dead by a New York City transit cop in a Harlem subway station.

The *Ark And The Ankh* is made up from recently discovered tapes belonging to the Henry Dumas Estate. Recorded in 1966, the interview is sometimes all but drowned out by the Arkestra in rehearsal. Like all good interviews, Dumas listens and observes, his polite questioning gently prods and probes at Ra's aura of defiance, until he finally gains unlimited access to the man's vast storehouse of knowledge and stately wisdom. Critics of Sun Ra used to scoff at his theories and his personal mythology, branding him as a cosmic joker rather than a visionary, with definite ideas on where he was coming from and his plans for his audience. No matter how detailed Dumas's questioning, Ra is ready with an answer that tosses open a previously undisclosed subject. This mixture of the artistic, the mystical and the political, superimposed over the Arkestra in the background, displays just how revolutionary a figure Ra was as apart of the 60s New Music underground.

SUNS OF ARQA UNIVERSE CITY

BM 72438549882 CD

BY CLIVE BELL

What's that Pet Shop Boys line about Claude Debussy with a disco beat? Here it's Gustav Mahler, or someone similarly late Romantic, who gets the disco treatment, as part of "D-Horango", an epic collage of orchestras, whales, Kabuki actors and Balinese Kechak chants. Like being lost inside a computer game, this is the oddest track on *Suns Of Arqa's* latest offering, *Universe City* more typically consists of dense eight minute dub workouts anchored by honcho Michael Vadeola's basslines. Veteran Arqa collaborators are strongly featured, namely the shenai of Karu Urvesh and the bowed sawing of Nicolas Magrel, one of London's premier performers of Indian classical music. The subterranean vocals of Tibetan Geshele Ngagang Sherap contribute to the music's dark hues.

Wadeola, normally based in Manchester, produced the album in Budapest at the studio of

fellow spirit Laszlo Horvath. As an previous Arqa albums, I find a lack of focus: bass lacks definition, loops are lumpy and the music drifts. Instruments arrive, meander, fade out – what does it all mean? Well, what it means is that in this kind of rich club glossiness, production is all-important, and sadly the Budapest sound is both drily and harsh. Happily, four of the eight tracks have been remixed by Youth in London. His delays send shivers and cascades across the music, the sound grows and a warm, airy expansiveness begins to take shape. The mighty Arqa howls out inflates and starts to fly.

MASAKATSU TAKAGI

PIA

CATAPPA CRIMPAC 0202

BY PHILIP SHEPHERD

At first blush, Pia follows in the wake of Oval Layer upon layer of digitally processed tones flow in interrupted currents, nonlinear but never circular. Fluid tones fracture, crack and pulse seemingly without logic. Microhythms appear in stuttering cadences, but are quickly obliterated by the radically unstable sprawl. Yet, in a sign of how quickly we have adapted to the once alienating methodologies of computer music, nothing in Takagi's method seems terribly mystifying; it's easy to imagine him sitting at his computer, blocking hundreds of fragments together on the screen.

But unlike Oval's sunspot collage, Takagi effuses a terrestrial – indeed, a social – perspective. What at first seems a hazy flicker of disembodied sound becomes ghost melodies fitting about; on "Beams" a toy piano stutters against a hazy Ambient backdrop, while on "Giro Piano" the jazzy little figures are even more obvious. Takagi's method intriguingly blends the familiar textures of digitally processed, alienated sound with more obviously sourced material. This is particularly apparent in his incorporation of field recordings of children at play, further contributing to the sense of childlike wonder that he evokes in the use of sparkling tones and radiant timbres, drawing comparisons to Nobuko Takekawa's work. Other listeners may think of Boards Of Canada, who have used children's voices in an attempt to infuse their music with nostalgic naivety. But here, the voices are turned into pure sonority, a liquid, wordless language drumming within the pulse of Takagi's outgoing and wonder-filled musical dialect.

JIMI TENOR UTOPIAN DREAM

SAKHOPIPU PUIZEE CD

BY JEROME MANUELL

On last year's *Of Nowhere*, Jimi Tenor broadened his cheeky electronic-jazz loungecore persona and delivered a grandiose orchestral album. Aside from the usual trademark tenor sax and flute, the record featured the 60 piece Orchestra of the Grand Theatre Lodz in Poland, blind star player Balaji Shivastava and Finland's Pro Cantor Chori. Largely instrumental, and carrying the often-cited 'soundtrack to an imaginary film' tag, it was a huge step sideways for Tenor. At least temporarily, he escaped from the black sheets of Barry White and nuzzled up to the likes of John Barry and Ennio Morricone with surprising success.

With its 90s, Utopian Dream might immediately raise fears of lavish prog/rock/New

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Soundcheck

Age excess, but in fact the album sees Teler returning to the simply structured jazz doodles he has always done best. Nothing here ditches in at much over five minutes: several tracks are merely one minute interludes, and you can't help thinking that the tide, in typical Teler fashion, is ironic. The album kicks off with the title track, complete with its Underground Resistance-style (think "Electronic Warfare"), pitched-down, apocalyptic vocal: "We are the utopian dream! It's already happening/Humanoids reanimated." Retro-futurist Detroit strings, a meaty analog bass and some louché drum machine patterns make the track sound closer to Displacement and Dweezil than usual Teler fare.

Things settle down soon afterwards into more schmaltzy space-jazz territory, as Teler gets his falsetto vocal into trim shape, and dusts down his sax and flute. The overall time is less kitschy than some of his earlier pieces to the ladies such as "Take Me Baby" on 1994's *Silhouettes* or "Senseless Love" on 1999's *Organism*. Even so, "Natural Cosmos Relief" sees him demand, "Show an amput that hairy and stinks with sweat/Do me a favour/Don't cover it in a floweret," over a grinding dirty bassline. Amiable, naughtily lush excursions take over through "Neumatic Rap," "Geriatric Afternoon" and the almost muzak-favoured "Grill-It-It," before the album takes us into much darker (and to these ears, more fun) sci-fi territory.

310 DOWNTOWN & BROOKLYN ONLY

BY JEROME MAMMILLI
Like many museums these days, 310 collaborate across long distances. Joseph Parker

lives in Seattle and collects sounds. He then sends them, by good old fashioned post, apparently, to his New York partner Tim Dawson, who then moulds them into loops, and adds layers of rhythm and production. Rather than detracting from their sound, this technique is at the heart of what 310 are about. On this release of their first two albums, *Ag 56* (1997) and *Snorehouse* (1998), you get the feeling that there is a story behind all of their samples. The overall sound is extremely eclectic, with elements of country, Ambient, Hip-hop and World Music slipping and sliding in and out of the mix, but the documentary, audio poland feeling of Parker's found sounds makes the whole thing much more curious and alluring than it could have been.

Ag 56 showcases the pair's mellower melodic side, opening with rich guitar work and horns, rather like the Ambient Ambients of Labradford. As the tracks segue into each other, we get sties, labies, weeping and wailing sounds, tummy arrangements, street beats, snorts. "Indifferent Tears" gives a beautiful nod to Steve Reich, with its slowly shifting pattern of guitars very much in the manner of the American minimalist (or Tanagra, for that matter). Meanwhile, *Snorehouse* focuses more on the texture of the beats, illustrating Dawson's production skills (he works as a HipHop engineer for The Roots, a Tribe Called Quest and Method Man, among others). "Raincannon" weaves a heavily textured vocal over tight, snappy drums and Ambient textures. "Term Show Complex" feels like going down some Amazonian backwater in a canoe with John Lee Hooker. While all of these moments are seeped in atmosphere and are crafted with obvious love and attention to detail, the collection does suffer

slightly from a static approach to structure. Individual tracks don't develop much once an initial loop is set up. Rather, they zero in on and develop a mood, before the next tune prompts a sudden shift forward. The result is a rather stilted take on the 'journey in your head' notion. This tho also means bouts of waiting in desolate lounges and sudden delays. Even so, it's a ride well worth taking.

23 SKIDOO SEVEN SONGS

ROBIN HODGE CD
23 SKIDOO
URBAN GEMELAN

BY CLIVE BELL
For a start they could have put both LPs onto one 70-minute CD, although then we would have lost some of Howie Bood's brilliant cover art. Anyway, 23 Skidoo, "the original punks on funk", are back with these long, long wailed CD releases. Cautiously choosing a nifty name from a William Burroughs tale, the group led by the early 80s pop establishment into thinking that they were something cool like Heaven 17 or Hermeto 100, before unleashing controversial live performances of industrial rock and Tibetan tape loops. In David Stubbs's interview (The Wire 197), bandist Sketch says of the Skidoo ethic: "One of the main strengths of the band is that it is whatever we feel like doing in that moment."

A strength and a weakness, maybe, as evidenced by the re-release of the first album, *Seven Songs*. Digitally recorded at breakneck pace over three days in 1981, it was produced by Giusseppe P. Orsini at his Death Factory. The anarchic space-junk pounding of the opener,

"Kundler", still sounds magnificent. "Wegas El Bando" is Felix On-Ak-funk stretched to a white crisp. Then the album descends into a dark cellar of grunting tape manipulation, from which it never quite emerges. On "Phono Bass", Skidoo find an unlikely ally in their anti-pop campaign, in the voice of Nippon sympathiser Umi Midori, who explains how pop is "the sign of a degenerating race". Back in 1981 you misinterpreted tape manually so at least these tracks have a gritty quality, rather than today's digital sheen. Finally "Quiet Please" turns us to rest at the exotic class "Quiet Village", all thump punks and screaming monkeys.

With 23 Skidoo, unevenness and skewed agendas are part of the deal. 1984's *Urban Gemelan* falls into two distinct halves, one per LP side. Based on a howl of fury sparked from Apocalyptic Now, "Riot" is a menacing smart funk, propelled by an excellent bassline from the newly arrived Sketch. The rest of side one explores dub landscapes, overlaid by sly, not really synchronised hand drumming. A bit of a mess, then, but side two saves the day with a highly focused project, a complete gamelan performance on soap metal and bamboo xylophones. This very convincing set of pieces was learned and then performed live at the ICA. Skidoo don't restrict themselves to gamelan motifs, allowing the music to veer off into areas influenced by funk and Japanese Kodo drumming. Their physical discipline and martial arts approach to their work are clearly on display. With *Urban Gemelan*, 23 Skidoo offer one of many interesting Western responses to the discovery of Indonesian music, running parallel with the exploding vacuum cleaners and awaking of Philip Buwell's *Wind Garden* Ensemble, which started up in 1983. □

The Boomerang

Recent releases: rated on the rebound

Originally released in 1973 on New York's tiny Perception label, **Larry Young's** *Lawrence Of New York* (Perception/Castle CMC288 CD) is an odyssey from the twilight years of electric jazz. In 1969 Young appeared on Miles Davis's *Decades* box set, and was a core member of the Tony Williams Lifetime, but he received few opportunities to record his own music, perhaps because he never confirmed to any recognizable models for a jazz organist. For Lawrence Of New York he assembled an unrecognised group: ten (count 'em) percussionists, two electric piano players, cellist Dedre Johnson, Charles Magee blowing electric trumpet, guitarist James Blood Ulmer, and two saxophonists. Dennis Moussie and a "mystery quintet" (possibly Phareah Sanders). Of the record's five tracks, "Sunshine Fly Away," "Saudia" and "Hello Your Quietness [Islands]" might best be described as avant garde collage, a set of sketched, Lefebvre ballads that are bent into new shapes by the open-ended arrangements, the heathere shimmer of the Hammond organ, and the harsh, atonal

scapings of the cello and saxophones. "Kiss Of Space Port Two - Welcome", on the other hand, is a supernova space jam propelled by a four note bass waltz, which is stretched with freefloating polyrhythms, and Young and the rest of the group improvise collectively and at will for over 12 minutes, pushing the track up through rising clouds of intensity.

The Gasoliné is the first two studio albums, *Con Anima/Concerto Grosso* (Leo Golden Years GY15 CD), released initially by the Soviet. Melodically alive in 1977 and 1980, are steps along the way towards their finest work. The foundations for their epic shaping living live improvisations are in evidence: readiness to allow idioms to clash; the grove swing primarily by drummer Vladimir Tarasov and sustained even through detached passages by the group's collective exhilaration; their fluency as musical playboys and confident sense of form; their sense of humour and sheer determination to publicly air private passions. They undoubtedly led off audiences, but in the studio the sparks still flew, and *Concerto Grosso* in particular, with its expanded instrumentation,

stands the test of time well.

Previously issued in Italy on vinyl as *Among The People, Live In Milano* (Leo Golden Years GY16 CD) captures **The Art Ensemble Of Chicago** live in August 1980, just a few months after they recorded the classic *Urban Bushmen* for ECM, making this the warm, relaxing but after the big game "Tutankhamun" is stretched out until its laidback lode descends into ghostly memento mori. A busy percussive piece provides a bridge to the vivid/filmic quick-change array of "A Jackson In Your House" the quintet is in mellow mood, on the upper slopes of a creative peak.

Surmise In Different Dimensions (Hatology 598 CD) captures a truncated **Son Arctique** live in Wilauaz, Switzerland in February 1980. There may be some misnomers here, but it often feels like a small group recording - a less cloudbusting, less galactic outing than usual with Ral's piano taking a more prominent position than in many of his recordings. Originally appearing as a double LP on Hat Hut in late 1980, this was also one of the first Arctique records to heavily feature the group taking the Fletcher Henderson/Duke Ellington standards that provided the foundations for Sonny Blount's subsequent journeys. While the horns play these tracks relatively straight, Ral inserts all sorts of awkward angles with his piano jobs - little fits of Malachuk putting out from Mondrian's Broadway Boogie Woogie. Of course,

that's not to say that saxophonists John Gilmore and Marshall Allen are all tuned-out junk and shine - there are high-register riffs and slurs and blurs on his originals like "Silhouettes Of The Shadow World" and "Pin-Points Of Spiral Prisms". Stare closely at the cover of *Club House 6* (Choice CH30 2XCD) and you'll notice the name of Ash Ra Tempel's guitarist **Manuel Gotschaling**. As an added extra to a compilation of low-class CDs from Chris Cowe, Freshcider and more, one disc in this two disc set is given over to Gotschaling's epochal E2-E4, an exquisite 50 minute waveform guitar solo into the massive electronic beyond recorded in 1982, and subsequently sampled or namechecked by everyone from Italian House supreme Saurio Lario and Basic Channel to Larry Levan and Frances Ford Coppola.

Curled by Syron Coley and Thurston Moore, *Jazzualot* (Get Back GET330 6xLP) is an ethereodyssey survey of avant garde, free jazz and psychedelia in French exile between 1969-71 by artists such as Suni Ar, Alan Sive, Sunny Murray, Andre Shapi, David Harris, Sonny Sharrock and more. Plundered from BGM/Act's archives, it was fully reviewed by Denis Proust when it came out as a title CD on Charly (The Wire 193). Now Get Back have repressed the set on six 180 degree vinyl albums, packaged in two triple folded sleeves. □ Reviewed by Julian Cowley, Tony Hemmings, Ken Hollings and Peter Shapiro

Avant Rock

Reviewed by David Keenan

ALTERNATIVE TV REVOLUTION

PUBLIC DOMAIN DOMINO CD

Both as *Alternative TV*'s mostly frontman and editor of the most hardcore of punk fanzines, *Severin* (Gus, Mark Perry is one of the great inspirational figures to come out of the UK's punk rock scene. His lyrics were always endearingly straightforward and heartfelt—sometimes hilariously so, as in “How Much Longer?” when he spat, “We all don’t know ruffin’ and we all don’t fuckin’ care!” 25 years later he’s still fired up, and though at points *Revolution* sounds slightly more polished than those early riffs, he still wears his heart in his throat. While the sub-Mohamud guitar and insouciant drums of the opening title track is a bit of a disappointment, songs like “Urban Kids”, complete with its massed howler boy choruses of “Urban kids... Escape!”, are as eye-wateringly beautiful as anything he’s penned. Great live versions of “Communication Failure” and the AVI anthem “Action Time Vase” are tackled on at the end as a bonus. But a line from “Never Gonna Give It Up” says it all: “When people say that at my age I should be somewhere else that I just don’t know/They just don’t know how I feel.”

THE LOFTY PILLARS AMSTERDAM

TRUCKSTOP ALP231/TRUCK33 CD

Michael Krassner has been all over the Chicago underground of late. After moving to the Midwest from LA in the mid-1990s, he’s probably best known as the guiding light of *The Backbeat Ensemble*, leading a stellar grouping of musicians that includes Will Oldham and The Dirty Three. Jim White through their orchestral Americana. Since then he’s set behind the desk on interesting records by Edith Poesl, Sarge, Dink and Tony Conrad. The *Lofty Pillars* project sees Krassner working together with two songwriting partners, multi-instrumentalist Will Hendricks and cellist Fred Lottberg-Helm. The sophisticated, European grace of Lottberg-Helm’s arrangements jives slightly with Krassner’s Country-tragedy songs, unfortunately highlighting some clumsy poetry. While Krassner is obviously influenced by Will Oldham—he even goes so far as to reference his “I See A Darkness”—his slightly naïf voice just isn’t glibly enough to really convince.

MAYA SHORE

FAREWELL TO INTRODUCTIONS THE MUSIC FELLOWSHIP MP007 CD

Farewell To Introductions is the debut album from Connecticut’s Maya Shore. With its jarring, algebraic stops and starts, their aesthetic is largely drawn from the epic downer sound of early 90s groups like Codeine and Seem. Yet there’s a punk frailty to their music, a cheap garage band aura preventing it from getting too clinical. Pining after girls and getting hung up, guitarist and vocalist Kelly Chambers’s lyrics might be pure high school confessional, but he’s no Jonathan Richman. Yet there’s still something idiosyncratically endearing in the way he’s so made the songs, delving the dripped off lines with the weight of biblical exegesis. And on tracks like

“Dana,” he may take three simple chords sound like riding straight into the sun.

DONALD MCPHERSON BRAMBLE

METONYMY 043 CD

Donald McPherson is a young guitarist based in New Zealand’s Stage Harbour, just outside Dunedin. Although he’s been making music since the early 90s, he’s mostly released it on terribly unavailable, ultra-limited indie cuts, most of which were reputedly destroyed by McPherson himself. Besides his old folk sides, he’s also been a floating collaborator with New Zealand drum kings Sander Lab Technicians, as part of their Unrepentant offshoot. As McPherson’s belated international debut, *Bramble* is a stunning statement of intent. Consisting of 12 tracks of uniquely emotive guitar in a variety of prepared states, drawn from home recordings made over the best part of the last decade, it ranges from grainy, screaming drones through foxy-styled nylon wrestling. Meanwhile, his bow work takes tight reedy gasps from his songs to make the guitar sound like a Japanese shamisen, almost.

MOTORPSYCHO PHANERTHYME

STOCKMAN PSYCHOMABLE 034 CD

The Norwegian power trio Motorpsycho regularly cut their psychedelics with all sorts of street trash, bubblegum and gasoline. Although in the past their records have emphasized their post-blue Cheer leader sensibility, *Phanertyme* marks their first extended tip into euphoric balloon pop, with guitarist Henk Magnus Ryan’s wonderful post-Queensrÿche guitar now married to some dandy pop that sounds like Jefferson Airplane circa Crown Of Creation or The Byrds, if they actually flew eight miles high. The production is period-precise perfect, with mussy warm bass, martial rhythms, undense brass and foggy choruses of vocal. But this is no retro freebass and has more in common with some of Japan’s new psychedelics. Besides the hyper arrangements on tracks like “Go To California” and “Painting The Night Union”, there are also some seductively stripped down pieces, none sweeter than the opening “Bedroom Eyes”, whose forlorn strings, acoustic guitar and piano sound as best as Nick Drake’s *By Your Layer*.

NERVES

THROCK THROCK THROCK CD

A rock ‘n’ roll trio from Chicago, Nerves have been shredding for the past four years, working a tough, primitive sound firmly modelled on the garage savagery of punkers like Chester Sicks and Dead Moon. But their third disc *World Of Gold* they slow up the pace somewhat, trimming drum grooves with subtle organ, vibraphone and piano. Bassist Seth Skundrick and drummer Elliot Dicks make a rock rhythm section, but at points they’re too metronomic, more ploughing than swinging, never really cutting loose. Their hillbilly barroom works best when they set out for newer territories, such as the seven-minute

“Behind The Stars”. Over a backing track that sounds like the Sweet Mays, vocalist Rob Datum turns in a performance as languid and dandified as Beethoven circa Here Come The Warm Jets.

TARA JANE O’NEIL IN THE SUN LINES QUARTERSTOCK 0571 CD

Tara Jane O’Neil’s second solo album expands on the half-notary spaces of her debut, opening out into hygienic visions of disembodied acoustic instruments emitting deep drones. O’Neil’s voice, meanwhile, flutters like Jon Mitchell at her most unworried. Recorded in a bathroom in hometown Louisiana, where she used to be a member of Rodan, in *The Sun Lines* is eerily spacious. Its vague, peripheral sounds coat her songs like dust. O’Neil has a way of extending awkward phrasing way past the point where it should work, increasing the music’s overall sense of dislocation. Although she’s a true multi-instrumentalist, playing everything from guitar, bass and drums through accordion, banjo and melodica, she’s helped out by a revealing cast of choruses: Rachel Grimes, of Rachel’s, adds girly propulsive piano to “This Morning”, and Idris Dan Littleton duets with her on “Your Rots Are”. Half Of Fame’s Samara Lubiano impresses upon parts on several tracks, but most effectively on “A Noise In The Head”—evocative dream music based on the buzz and hum of the city’s late night symphonies.

ORA FINAL

ICR 10002 CD

Ora are a group of experimental musicians from the north of England based around the trio of Colin Potter, Denise Tate and Andrew Chalk, bolstered by Dariusz Szulski and Lol Coshill. Potter is best known as a floating member of Nurse With Wound. He has also engineered most of their material since *Thunder Perfect Mind*. As half of *Final*, his duo with Christoph Heermann, Andrew Chalk also has connections with the ecstatic underground. Duo compositions are assembled from a combination of found sounds and detoured instruments, and each track feels like a tormented trip through vast subterranean labyrinths of gurgle and echo. Compiled from new and deleted CD-R tracks, *Final* feels slowly into view with the opening “Distances”, as which the group harvest vast drones to a monolithic glitch. “Things Shall Fall” dumps Lol Coshill down a back alley, where he strives to be heard over garbage can percussion and some monstrous screeching. The closing “Actress” is a beautifully constructed series of arcing drones that speaks so eloquently of *Wavelengths*, it could be the aural equivalent of nose blindness.

HOPE SANDOVAL & THE WARM INVENTIONS BAVARIAN FRUIT BREAD ROUGH TRADE RT04833 CD

Last year’s *At The Doornay* album EP was a gentle introduction to the new melancholy folk sound that Hope Sandoval has been developing alongside another My Bloody Valentine drummer

Carm O’Closa since splitting from Mazzy Star. But *Beauvoir Fruit Bread* is tougher going. Sandoval’s overly stylized vocals really start to gale over the distance of a whole LP, where she often sounds like she’s more concerned with rolling phonetics around her tongue, dripping in breathless babydoll moments or taking a mirror than actually engaging with the lyrics. She may be well as singing a bus timetable for all the genuine emotion she puts into them. With her old songwriting partner David Roback out of the picture, the music is less overtly psychedellic, but flashes of phased guitar and backwards tapes render extended tracks like “Love Me On The Way” satisfyingly disorienting. Elsewhere the out of focus acoustics, Velvet guitars and Dylan harmonica provide enough superficial signifiers to please any would-be hipster.

SLEEPYTIME GORILLA MUSEUM

GRAND OPENING & CLOSING SEELAND 593 CD

Bay Area group Sleepytime Gorilla Museum purportedly base their theatrical concept on the supposed existence of a Futurist museum that only opened its doors for 47 days during its 34 year history in an attempt to challenge notions of, uh, “open” and “closed”. Released on Negativland’s label, the over the top packaging consists of a chunky cardboard box full of yellowed photographs and a booklet about the museum. The music itself is provided by vocalist Mike Foyt and bassist Dan Rabinov, both from Los Angeles. Species Being drumming Frank Grass, and the great Mole Stamos, a Zowie-like junk percussionist. Sadly, the elaborate packaging can’t cover the paucity of original musical ideas. They start the humour of *The Residents* with the stop/start guitars of King Crimson, and memento male/female vocal duetting that make them sound like some desperately witty operatic metal group. Simply unbearable.

SCOTT TUMA HARD AGAIN

TRUCKSTOP ALP231/TRUCK 21 CD

Tuma used to be guitarist and vocalist with Sordid American, who specialised in great widescreen slabs of American roots music. Since then, he’s holed up with the over-fluctuating Backward Ensemble for their global peregrinations. But *Hard Again*, the first record released under his own name, steps closer into American sound, though its hints of older-time gospel and hillbilly folk are filtered through some desolate space. Indeed there’s an apocalyptic stillness to the music, as if its blues had been stripped of all resolve. Built up from Mazzy-Cane-like guitar, droning organ and occasional drums courtesy of The Dirty Three’s Jim White, each track follows some higher organic logic, its constituent parts coming into bloom like a slow-bubbling flower. Elsewhere the album carries hints of Godspeed You! Black Emperor at their most rearguard, and even the lonesome discolours music of 1930s street wandering Washington Phillips. Yet regardless of such ghost shadows, Scott Tuma’s music remains resolutely his own. □



with **D12**
solvent
solvent city mix ip/cd



from **D23**
m.c.m.
please smile my noise bleed ip/cd



from **D23**
lali puna
scary world theory ip/cd



cds - 100% vinyl, 0%
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other people's children



a number of
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solvent

RAKAL 007
m.c.m.

RAKAL 008
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christian kleine

RAKAL 010
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RAKAL 011
solvent

RAKAL 012
m.c.m.

RAKAL 013
lali puna

RAKAL 014
christian kleine

RAKAL 015
a number of small things

RAKAL 016
solvent

RAKAL 017
m.c.m.

RAKAL 018
lali puna

RAKAL 019
christian kleine

RAKAL 020
a number of small things

RAKAL 021
solvent

RAKAL 022
m.c.m.

RAKAL 023
lali puna

RAKAL 024
christian kleine

RAKAL 025
a number of small things

RAKAL 026
solvent

RAKAL 027
m.c.m.

RAKAL 028
lali puna

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RAKAL 030
a number of small things

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m.c.m.

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lali puna

RAKAL 034
christian kleine

RAKAL 035
a number of small things

RAKAL 036
solvent

RAKAL 037
m.c.m.

RAKAL 038
lali puna

RAKAL 039
christian kleine

RAKAL 040
a number of small things

RAKAL 041
solvent

RAKAL 042
m.c.m.

RAKAL 043
lali puna

RAKAL 044
christian kleine

RAKAL 045
a number of small things

RAKAL 046
solvent

RAKAL 047
m.c.m.

RAKAL 048
lali puna

RAKAL 049
christian kleine

RAKAL 050
a number of small things

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solvent

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m.c.m.

RAKAL 053
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christian kleine

RAKAL 060
a number of small things

RAKAL 061
solvent

RAKAL 062
m.c.m.

RAKAL 063
lali puna

RAKAL 064
christian kleine

RAKAL 065
a number of small things

RAKAL 066
solvent

RAKAL 067
m.c.m.

RAKAL 068
lali puna

RAKAL 069
christian kleine

RAKAL 070
a number of small things

RAKAL 071
solvent

RAKAL 072
m.c.m.

RAKAL 073
lali puna

RAKAL 074
christian kleine

RAKAL 075
a number of small things

RAKAL 076
solvent

RAKAL 077
m.c.m.

RAKAL 078
lali puna

RAKAL 079
christian kleine

RAKAL 080
a number of small things

RAKAL 081
solvent

RAKAL 082
m.c.m.

RAKAL 083
lali puna

RAKAL 084
christian kleine

RAKAL 085
a number of small things

RAKAL 086
solvent

RAKAL 087
m.c.m.

RAKAL 088
lali puna

RAKAL 089
christian kleine

RAKAL 090
a number of small things

RAKAL 091
solvent

RAKAL 092
m.c.m.

RAKAL 093
lali puna

RAKAL 094
christian kleine

RAKAL 095
a number of small things

RAKAL 096
solvent

RAKAL 097
m.c.m.

RAKAL 098
lali puna

RAKAL 099
christian kleine

RAKAL 100
a number of small things

RAKAL 101
solvent

RAKAL 102
m.c.m.

RAKAL 103
lali puna

RAKAL 104
christian kleine

RAKAL 105
a number of small things

RA

Dub

Reviewed by Steve Barker

CORNERSHOP MOTION THE 11 BURRO SCOTTY 7"

This single should be sought out if only for a lyric that rhymes the title with "gals miss seven". Well, Tyrone Singh has never been a man to overlook a key cultural connection. Apparently the track is being given away at CornerShop's monthly roots reggae sounds night, Ital, at various venues around London. It flags their new album, wherein we can expect most of the same from a group who have long been heavily into dub and reggae as this single lovingly demonstrates.

MASSILIA SOUND SYSTEM

3668 CR13
WORLD VILLAGE 469004 CD

MASSILIA SOUND SYSTEM

YA DES FOIS
WORLD VILLAGE WMP115 CD

Based in Vauls, the apt-nip dub/folk group Massilia all manage to fit into the Cribin 2CV, whose registration number gives their album its title. The sleeve's "Thanks to..." section includes Fat Pissum helmeted solo-a-blues warbird Bob Log III, Son Of Boomer, 13th Floor Elevators, Chico Science and Dr Alimantado, among other musical neeradoles, serving notice that you are in for a ride as rough as the group's chosen transport. The best place to start is the new single "Ya Des Fois", a track lifted from the album and subjected to a tough but polished vocal and dub remix treatment from Adrian Sherwood. The more interesting LP cuts stray away from the declaratory chanting MC style beloved by French reggae into a more Charles Trent-era dubwise style. However, a basic understanding of French will get you rowling.

RHYTHM & SOUND WITH CORNEIL CAMPBELL KING IN MY EMPIRE RURAL MIX 11"

Matching Basic Channel's Rhythm & Sound team with vocalist Corneil Campbell is a marriage made in dub/reggae heaven. Anyone already used to Thomas's appealing yet mannered vocals for the Berlin dubwise night loc RAS have reached a creative cul de sac, but reggae veteran Corneil Campbell transports the enterprise to another sweet level. While much modern reggae either overproduces or overfills a track, these cuts go in the opposite direction and are all the more powerful and ending for it, with Campbell's delivery matching his rude Curtis Mayfield for purity of feeling over the heartbeat pulse of the rhythm.

ADRIAN SHERWOOD ZERO ZERO ONE/PASS THE RIZLA GREEN TEA GTT668 10"

Remarkably, this is the debut solo release from the producer who led the bleeding edge of sound technology abuse through the 1980s. The "Rizla" lyric has been bubbling around for a long time, and comes to the surface here sung by his dear departed friends Ben Sherman and Prince Far I, over beats from Asian Dub Foundation's

Sunguy "Zero Zero One" revisits the backbeat template of a brutal Keith Leblanc beat under sampled loops on a god and drugs theme. Both tracks have a manic dancehall flavour, and herald Sherwood's forthcoming full-length debut, Christine Massone

THE SLACKERS REDHUT HEULCAT RD4092 CD

VARIOUS KNOCK OUT SKA HEARTBEAT HB3730 CD

The musicians powering the Jamaican ska and rocksteady revolutions of the 1960s were largely carrying a jazz attitude, even if the music's creative underpinnings were not immediately apparent due to the excitement generated by the delivery and the exuberance of the vocalists. Almost 40 years on, the jazz connection long broken, a rash of US based punk ska outfits are generating plenty of energy on previous title subculture. But the Slackers are different – maybe it's an adult thing? Sharing the same label as Joe Strummer is a bit tough, but their unpretentious follow-up to last year's *Wasted Days* is high on quality playing, ideas and humour. Opening with "Cooking For Terrence" (McCook), an instrumental tribute to a late Skatalite, these Brooklyners' credentials are immediately established. Not as much dubbing as on their previous effort but worth heading for.

The 'real thing' comes via yet another Duke Reid compilation of his treasure like material. Even discerning collectors of reggae and its antecedents will need to keep a close eye on their Duke Reid compilations, as they breed surreptitiously. Of course, with such a prolific producer, there are always gems awaiting retrieval. This collection boasts 20 ska cuts dating from the early to end-60s, many of which are previously unreleased or new to CD – in the US at least. Musicians on file: Fitzgerald's A-Triest A-bakers and Elvis's "Love Me Tender" presene the pop connection, Don Drummond's "Rock Out Punch" and classic "Doc Smoke" satisfy the classic reggae, and Justin Helder's ultra rare "Use Of Judah" brings comfort to the seeker. Producing such balanced compilations is what established Heartbeat as forerunners of the reggae revival.

TWILIGHT CIRCUS DUB SOUND SYSTEM DUB PLATE SELECTION M.MEO LP

A welcome heavyweight vinyl release, cut at Berlin's Outtakes & Mastering Studio, for the 1998 album which provides the perfect entry point for newcomers into the world of the Twilight Circus. This modern dub classic is Ryan Moore's bestseller to date. Of its few blistering outtakes, the star track is undoubtedly "Lowell And Nine", which takes a drum loop from the subject of its tribute, Lowell Fuller's '54 Outback. For reasons technically beyond this writer to understand or explain, Sly is one of the few drummers whose sound is immediately recognisable, regardless of whether it is being played in real time or virtually generated.

VARIOUS GREENSLEEVES RHYTHM ALBUM #16 (ISADAM BIRTHDAY PARTY/JAILBREAK) GREENSLEEVES GR1716 CD

VARIOUS GREENSLEEVES RHYTHM ALBUM #17 (HERBALIST/ENERGY) GREENSLEEVES GR1717 CD

A monthly column is nowhere near regular enough to keep up with the current pace of Jamaica dancehall 7" single releases, whose Mayhem on the street only exceeds the bustle by a number of seconds. So these Greensleeves sets provide a valuable cultural and social service for any rhythm slave seeking to avoid piracy. What's more, these collections usually give these beats out here ahead of the singles on the street. For anyone having to choose between these two new sets, I would recommend Album #16, where Marley Marl turns out the toughest rhythm for his own Arson Production and Marcellous delivers the title track in vengeful style. Even non-dancers will need to lay down after an album's worth of this stuff.

VARIOUS NOW THING MC WAX MW1145 CD

Although the stylistic output of the Mc Wax label has been varied, its underpinnings are largely pre-modern, impressionistic or expressionistic. Now here comes a 10,000 volt shock to the label's musical body with a full-on Verbalist attack from the razzed dancehall begones. Purely constructed, yet abstract and brutalist, these Jamaican dancehall dub and instrumental are every bit as confrontational as the militant clats of 70s roots rock reggae and dub. More so, in fact, such is the influence of Perry, Bogle and Pablo on modern music. Much of what has gone on in Jamaica post-Singling has been conducted for the gain of the largely uninterested mainstream music business – with the notable exception of emcees from the world of Bobo. Lenky and Frenchie are to be congratulated on breaching the walls with this collection – even if they're shameless enough to include a few of their own cuts – bringing the likes of the "Grass Cycle", "Babes", "Warriors" and "Stress" rhythms into our streets, dancehalls and homes. This is real Metal Machine Music.

VARIOUS O2 SCISSORS (STONE SCISSORS.PAPER) PLAY PLAY023 CD

The Tokyo based label Play confirms its series spanning the globe for artists united in their decision to dancehall experimentation in defiance of the all-conquering corporate beast that is House. Drawing on their disparate origins and influences, artists at Play – among them Burnt Friedman, DJ Spooky and Lole Vibert – largely keep up a continual construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of their constituent parts to hint at a new genre in freestyle dub. Though these are the names that

draw you in, investigating its unknown entries rewards you with the real new staff: 20 year old Japanese student Tokyo manipulates found sounds, including igniting Zippo lighters and beaten kitchen plates, according to an equation that creates neverending possibilities. On "Fossil", he develops subtle themes on top of that most unadorned sound tool, a Miami style boombox.

VARIOUS STUDIO ONE ROOTS SOUL JAZZ SURF88 CD/LP

The reggae police who circle the Soul Jazz office with a summons headed "Oxyanite Selection Crime" will be recalled immediately when word of this elemental release hits the streets. Put together by Honest Jon's Mark Ansell who also helped out with Blood & Fire's *Darker Than Blue* reggae/soul set, this is an impeccable selection of deep, deep roots tunes, many of them rare or extremely difficult to find for the average reggae purist. The mix of vocals and instrumentals all carries that of unique Studio One hypnotic bass sound. Among the songs are the late Dewon Russell's original vocal version of "Dram Song", The Gaylads' inspirational hymn "Africa", and Cornel Campbell's equestrian "Natty Don't Go". Meanwhile, the standout instrumental track opening the set is a Sun Ra style foundation beat from Count Ossie with The Cymones, which is in all senses a revelation. However, the reverberant reverbist notes strike an off-bitter note the way they tend to rewrite history according to the worldview of Clement Dodd. Regardless of the context in which this music was created, it must now stand alone. And although the Studio One vocals are still overflowing with material ripe for reuse, I cannot see this set being improved on.

ZORN ECKERMANN/VIAN CITY CENTRE OFFICES BLOOM111 7"

OPHATE/DUB TRACTOR OPHATE/DUB TRACTOR CITY CENTRE OFFICES BLOOM111 12"

City Centre Offices is a local enterprise aped between Manchester's Babel Grooves distribution and retail outlet and their Berlin compatriots Merz Music. Their venture explores in indefinable strain in modern music that is post-electronic yet referential, without boundaries and resolutely independent. This release from Berlin's Mohol Zorn typifies an em-gem, served by a media-unfriendly limited edition 7" release from a series that has previously featured artists such as Aronson, Fazzaroni and Loughlan. "Eckermann" is a two year old track with liquid guitar loops over very warm organic beats, whereas the more contemporary "Vian" lays a frother Berlin style beat on the daydream. Further west in Denmark, two thirds of Future 3 become Ophate and Dub Tractor. (Thomas Kink of the former recently picked up some production credits on Björk's *Vespertine*.) Defined as "Glitch/electroacoustic", this music is suggested as accompaniment for extended warm bathing sessions, or lying naked in the snow. [

Electronica

Reviewed by Chris Sharp

AMMER & CONSOLE/ LAAR & ZEITBLIND/ MERDZO & KULLUKCU/ ROBERT LIPPOK AUDIOLOUNGE INTERMEDIUM 009 2XCD

These electronic improvisations were carried out in front of an audience at the Academy of Fine Arts in Berlin on 21 November 1999 and broadcast live across Germany, combining the admirable and longstanding tradition of that country's radio support for sound art. Robert Lippok of La Roccia first opens proceedings with "Galenstein", which folds a succession of sweet and sparse arpeggios into an appealing menagerie of twirly sonorities. Things get slightly more rigorous with the arrival of the Western collective Console, whose "Hienat Und Technik" is effectively a remix of a recording by philosopher Martin Heidegger, whose querulous tones emerge, wistfully, from a swirling collection of shimmering analogue synth tones and burlies. Robert Merdzo and Bülent Kullukcu launch into the fray with a driving, energetically collaged composition that nods in the direction of both DAF and The Haller Trio's *Fuck Finally*, Kalle Laar and Georg Zeitblom offer "Hypersound Coscrite", as the title implies, the music reconfigures writhing chunks of electronic distortion, tethering those wayward frequencies to a flickering and fading 4/4 rhythm.

MARKUS GUENTHER IN MOLL KOMPAKT CD1

Guenther clearly draws inspiration from Wolfgang Voigt's Gas project, but, if anything, *In Moll* (in *Moll*) outpaces its template for lush density of sound. This is anaxiastic stuff, all steadily pulsing kidrums and oceanic chords, but it's made asurgent by melancholy chimes and goitering static, so things never get too cloying. And the sheer physical presence of the sound verges on the cinematic — the looming lower register on the unfilled fourth track advances through the mix like a tsunami. Everywhere, though, that muscular low end is counterbalanced by sweetly mournful

tristramulations at the other end of the frequency spectrum, which sparkle like waltzops moving restlessly and mesmerically above the adagio depths of the sea.

YOSHINHO HANNO APRIL. REMIXES. SUB ROBA RHYTHM CD

This fascinating release makes available in the West the five lengthy studio pieces that Hanno released last year on his own Carque Japan label as April, adding three remixes. Hanno started out in avant-garde jazz, and made several drum 'n' bass influenced recordings as Multiphasic Ensemble, including 1997's excellent *King Of May*, but in stepping back a month he's managed to top all of his previous work. April is capriciously inconstant, all intuitive jump-outs and sudden shifts of emphasis, but Hanno offers far more than just slightly laptop gymnastics — these pieces of music embody the understanding that quirkiness and restlessness of motion must be counterbalanced by redemptive stillness for maximum impact. There's melodic interest too: the pure sustain of a piano chord is repeatedly mined for resonance on the opening "On/Off Edit", while "Lab Suite's" tumble of processed vocals somehow manages to evoke the ancient harmonic intervals of early French polyphonyists such as Machaut or Perotin while sounding modern at the same time. The remixes — by Oval, Christophe Charles and Hidenote II — are not without interest, but it's Hanno's originals that will have you coming back for more.

THE RIP-OFF ARTIST PUMP MILLE PLATEAUX MP106 CD

The Rip-Off Artist is Matt Haines, and Pump, his seventh album, pays homage to life aboard a Pacific Ocean oil rig, or so we're told. There are 66 tracks on the 43 minute CD, although it's really just 13 longer pieces quackishly subdivided into brief fragments, with PQ points slightly marking the entry of a new part or a subtle shift in the rhythmic ensemble. Verbally, Pump revels in the peculiar industrial

terminology of the drilling station as well as the reverent shorthand of the bedroom programmer. So, the section titled "Swage Nipple" deconstructs itself with helpfully descriptive subsections like "Click", "Some Much-Needed High End" and "Variation On The Theme". It's all smile-provoking stuff and, thankfully, the music manages to justify the attention to detail — not to say tomfoolery — that's gone into the schematics. Pump is a hard edged disc not, lurching in the direction of the dancefloor without ever quite getting there, and sparkling with crystalline digital fragments that pop out from the foreground of the mix, sharp enough to poke your eyes out.

SYBARITE PLACEMENT ISSUES STATIC CARAVAN VAND3 CD

Considerably more rewarding than anything else on this page is Placement Issues by Brooklyn based composer and one time Silver Apples collaborator Xan Hawkins, aka Sybarite. The album follows last year's *Muscle For A Film* (which appeared on the excellent Temporary Residence label) and it collects music that has hitherto been strewn across one-off releases on vinyl only labels like Zeal and Emarc. Sybarite brings two great things to the table, an ear for a genuinely beguiling melody, and a keen ability to merge organic texture (acoustic guitars, flickering woodwind) with a deftly orchestrated array of digital material. There's never any sense of stasis, either. The tracks undergo constant evolution as parts unobtrusively add and recede, producing an inexorable forward motion; founded on crisp polyrhythms, and revealing in their sleek purity of line, they glide effortlessly towards timeless horizons.

ASMUS TIETCHENS & DAVID LEE MYERS FLUSSDICHT DISCO-BRUT! EP2 CD

German experimentalist Asmus Tietchens and David Lee Myers (perhaps best known for his work with Acanne Deixie) were both awakened to the glorious possibilities of electronal

amplification by The Beatles in the early 60s, then twisted by electroacoustic discoveries later in the decade, in America, Myers happened across the dark menace of Rod Dotsider's drone compositions such as *Apocalypse*, while Tietchens inevitably encountered the work of Stockhausen's Studio Für Elektronische Musik in Cologne. Although both felt an instinctive kinship with these austere manipulations, each went through flirtations with Krautrock. Frip and Enz before setting down in the 80s to measure and extensive explorations of space and tone. All of which suggests that a collaboration was only a matter of time, and the fine release is worth the wait. It hovers delicately around the fringes of the downtown academic, but as Tietchens expertly and sensitively ushers Myers's feedback-drenched source material around the stereo spectrum, intelligently introducing cavernous spaces and tactile edges, the sense of being in the hands of some kind of master is obliquely rewarding.

VITA ENA FORCE INC FIM093 CD

Vita is yet another addition to Force Inc's seemingly inexhaustible ranks of Techno auteurs. It features abstract artwork (lines and shapes, autumnal tones); an Ambient opening track that gives way to beat orientated music; meaningless titles ("vntst", "post", and, complete with no doubt casual underscore, "van_1"); and some absorbing and entertaining alienations. OK, I lied about the alienations. Sometimes I wonder whether there's a computer somewhere in Frankfurt which churns this stuff out, packaging and all, without the benefit of any human intervention whatsoever. Which, in all likelihood, is exactly what you're supposed to wonder. Ena is an entirely competent and singularly unremarkable demonstration of the sonic place where Techno and glitchtronica meet — a parade of Geiger counter kidrums and amorphous digital waveforms revealing antiseptically around one another. At 75 minutes, it probably takes up more time than you currently have for this sort of thing. □



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HipHop

Reviewed by Hua Hsu

BAS-1 FOR THE MENTALLY ASTUTE

HEARST/HINO 15 CD/SP

You have to wonder if Alka Bambastra ever buns his head in his hands and wonders why nobody listens. Where are my real HipHoppers? Delivering one of the most earnest and dedicated debut albums in some time, true school Dabtown rapper Bas-1 is the type of guy who keeps the fias looking fresh, the modallions shiny and the any sprays can barks sprightly. Though he's been slugging it out in the Bay Area for years, Mentally Astute represents Bas's debut release, and he's collected a lot to say. Getting through 34 tracks would usually come over like some rap war of attrition, but his staunch devotion to HipHop's four elements — MCing, Dling, graffiti and breakdancing — makes the disc feel organic, at times effortless. "I walk into a yard feeling HAWAII," he booms on the graffiti-celebration "Rain Yard," part of a lengthy chapter wherein Bas tags up the sacred art of the urban hermitage. B-boys get their props on "Foot Crimes," and in case you didn't get the point with the constant throwback references, "Electro Synthesizers" conclusively testifies that he has never grown out of 1984. The vocoder may render unintelligible, but it's an absolutely nasty track that cracks, torques and synths every night, like some sort of cosmic crank jam. Of course, his fits in for the classic HipHop target — the wack rapper, in a swiveling voice best described as too short meets (guff) Eminem, he warns, "I feel like a cat sometimes, I wanna beat these people's ass!" Finally, someone said it: the bag guy upturns himself, rising easy as he climbs into his bag brass baby bed.

DUNGEON FAMILY TRANS OF EXPRESS

ARISTA/ARPH048 12

Fare thee well, dream swamp. Hello Alienagnet! Traveling at the speed of thought, Atlanta's Dungeon Family sky their hoarfrost across the Atlantic, ducking down on the wrong side of the automobile with a G-fut take on Kraftwerk. "Simple as a dingle, am't it?" Bits And Buds 3000 over waterfall synths and Chrome guitar ticks. In-house producers Organized Noise turn "Trans-Europe Express" into pimpish, burning rubbers for some four-on-the-floor Hototata swag. And the way Cee-Loo, Joi and Sleepy Brown tie the triplicate falsetto to make a poorly conceived hook sound damn hummable is remarkable.

DJ FOOD & DK SOLID STEEL

NINJA TUNE ZENR01 CD

A good mixtape is one of life's secrets, unexpected pleasures, like finding a silver dollar or happening upon a no-hitter in the third inning. In the first installment of a new mix series, Ninja Tune's own molecular beat squad hits every conceivable mixtape cliché, from 1980s relic "The Bear's" (Mirror In The Bathroom) to Ranc Groun Krunch (Saba Martinez's "Horsefly Ayssa") to drive 'n' beat rap a cappella. They're not just mixtapes, they're the funky producers, and the mix is absolutely fantastic. The Ninja pay

attention to the details, insuring that the right mix of Jerr's crumb-grabbing Boston marries Ozunika Debech's precise return, "Come On!" slowly dissolving into "Changel One Suite." They even show some space cadet proclivities, letting Sun Ra throw another monologue on the line over Herbie Hancock's "Nobu." The measure of a good mix comes in its ability to tie the loose ends, temper the mood organically over a full hour and draw to a close without the shock of nipped bandages. As we hit the home stretch, Art Of Noise shakes hands briefly with Boards Of Canada, and you can't tell which was recorded nearly 20 years ago. Fast-D spinsomes all out on the affair, and we "ride high" on his offer, here, like it was quarter past three in a perfect world.

DJ KRUSH ZEN

RED INC/WORHP07 CD/SP

In the hands of anyone else, a title like Zen would mean bad gasha references, gang samples or confused appropriations of kung fu. For Japanese HipHop one-stop DJ Krush, it's a lovely appropriation of his evolving view of sound approaching peace. Over the past decade, he has gone from Acid Jazz (without the beer) to boombox to jazz again, collaborating with everyone from Toshimori Kondo and DJ Shadow to Ron Size and Mos Def. Zen might be his most mature release to date, but it's also his first to feature a full sound (thanks, DJ Daid), and that's part of his genius. Guests usually clutter affairs, but Krush handpicks his new color and textures with which to experiment, different faces expressing familiar emotions. The MC-driven tracks take a backseat to more melodic pick-ups like Zap Mama's hypnotic "Dance Of Love" and W.Doe Downports' "With Glee." The finale, "Da's End" finds Krush and Kazumasa Danzawa surveying the flatlands to a sprinkling of kalimba and trumpet. Listen beyond the speakers and you realize Krush's increasingly inward, Ambient textures, the way he rubs glass and polishes gloves just beyond the ears' recognition. At a time when the maelstrom of world politics has confused, if not dwarfed, the place of art, the stunning "Candle Chime" captures it all. A mournful wash of acoustic guitar led by the weedy, sepiu waves of Japan's Boss The MC, all in a tongue I can't understand but expressed with a universal human sincerity.

LONDON POSSE GANGSTER CHRONICLE

SOURCE/WORHP14 WORD011 CD/SP

An enduring debate in academic circles turns on how one should objectively approach history. Do we hold yesterday's follies against their own surroundings, or can we instead side our ethical systems over to their epochs, judging their actions and reactions against what we now know? Rap music, give or take a sweater vest, is no different. Gangster Chronicle is a cornerstone of British rap, a swerved 1990 collection from one of the UK's most influential groups which presaged contemporary rap's dancehall fusion ("Money Mad," "Jump Around"), featured some decent beats ("Luv'n Parrot") and ushered in a

period of Brit rap self-confidence. But for all its historical significance, Gangster simply sounds dated, compared to today's excellent UK acts and 1990's outstanding American releases (AmeriKKa Most Wanted, Fear Of A Black Planet). Comparing along either axis of time and place, Gangster Chronicle's low moments are, Block Rock might say, like Woe! HipHouse ballads, cabaret reggae and lines like "There was a slug in my old days of blaggin'" simply haven't survived the test of time, sorry to say.

NAS STILLMATIC

ZZ 031 12

There's nothing like rap feuds to remind us of who's really important. The background is irrelevant — simply know that this latest black on black script involves Nas, Mob Deep, Jay-Z, Cormega, Jadaice and Beanie Sigel catching stay dares and weaving realpolitik. On a basic scorecard level, Jay-Z wins with his vengeful new besecher, "The Takeover," but what makes Nas's white label so intriguing is its promise. While the rest dedicate entire songs to dawning each other back into the bucket, Nas uses Jayho's effrontery as a chance to affirm his more autobiographical "street disciple" persona of the early 1990s. Call it regeneration through violence. "Ma I'm sorry who the fuck I am," little Nasir says, despite forked by joy and desperation. Despite the obligatory Jay-Z doses ("Is he to the 12, Ma to the 122?/Per shizzle you phony, the rapper version of Sisco"). "Stillmatic" is more about Nas getting back in touch with those demons made, reflecting on growing from stick-up kid to Five Percenter. "In the projects I used Mohammed in linen garments," he raps, before painting an apocalyptic vision of urban contradictions.

REKS ALONG CAME THE CHOSEN

BRICK LSNR027 CD/SP

Boston's HipHop scene has changed since the days of Ruby The Legitimate, The Rappers and "Poopy Rap." For one, it's no longer necessary to move to New York to put out hits. Reks hails from Lawrence, MA, a spot just outside Boston "where burnt building beams be flying free throughout the scenery." Along Came... the explicit debut subjects ("hometown," "kids," "conscious" and "posse" songs) and packs a passable minor league Premier/Akhemmet award. "Joy Of Black Folk" chronicles pathology in little Laidown, with Reks lamenting an incomplete childhood where there was "no time for G! Joe, dawg: I was having sex." He might be another penitentiary face reeks, but he's not aware to a chuckle. Check "Meet Corey Christy" for a slap-on-the-stick debate on the politics of introducing youth too often. De wherefore art thou, TDS Mob?

VARIOUS SOUND INK-CALPUSUS

ROUND INK SANC02 CD/SP

"Monday Night At Flax" would have frightened the heads of everyone back in 1991, when Zer

Love X and shorty Kurosu Jaga were just positive causes in a much damaged society. Now, society isn't the only thing that's damaged, and Zer (today known as MF Doom) and Kurosu don't hide the forced chuckles so well. Whether, King Honey's bust and Kurosu's ball dropping, hatrows make "Flax" one of the year's best singles, regardless of size. It's mostly the voice for Anti-Rap star M Sayid, whose "Jimmy Dingle" finds space on the same line as "Amby Conigan" and "Portland, Oregon." Saphira gets her freak on with the glorious "De la Agita," and you'd think she was just biting Timberland if you didn't know she was an accomplished tabla soloist in her own right. Heat Sensor's "Isotonic" keeps up the beyond aesthetic, making a brief stopover amid the desert plains of Larry Arabia and US bombs (and car packages). But you have to wonder is the search for El Futuro really just a way to pass off inferior equipment and etno-utopia? No matter, Timberland was there first anyway.

VARIOUS WE CAME FROM KUNDO

RAZOR AND THE 7600 HSR021 CD

Mike Nardone, host of the longest running HipHop radio show, has seen it all. Breaking everyone from Cypress Hill and Heron to E-Rule and Azeal, he's run the linked Empire's megawatts for almost 15 years from his tiny Sunday night booth at KXLU 88.9 FM. Named after his show, this is a pretty interesting document of how independent HipHop changed throughout the past decade. Freestyle Fellowship's 1992 B-side "Ummmm" answers, "We will never fall the fuck out... we promise." A young Jansco 5 quote Gato by harmonizing, "I'm about to blow the fuck up 'cause I refuse to quit," on their 1994 debut, "United Rebelkution." Here in 2001? Rhysapacer phenom Erykah Badu in grey dress, wearing glasses, wear by spring. "Welcome to the 21st sub-conscious of an actor/Who mastered his childhood to stop the audience's laughter." The most touching moment comes at the end with the Rob Doe Hi-Sides' tribute to a sadly departed local DJ and friend of Nardone, Over 17 minutes, 19 of the rapper's MCs eulogize their dear friend Rob and struggle with sober godposts, though as Azeal concedes, "this rhyme I wrote is probably my best try."

WILL.I.AM LOST CHANGE

8885 BG009 CD/SP

If such a thing is possible, Lost Change represents all that is good in contemporary Los Angeles. The latest Beat Generation entry from this lauded Black Eyed Peas producer is strictly for the chameleon set, the music taking most of its inspiration from a Raahy short film advertising jeans. But hey, whatever it takes to get wordy. Mendes has some Uncle Jam's Army reminiscing type business. "In the badass look that stepped on the signpost monkey feet," she hails on "Hoods Hella Free" over Will's oddity Eastern-sounding flares. Elsewhere, Big Will's eponymous for some Soukranian action and bells derm money for Luts here, reggae and classical guitar. Like L.A., it's a beautiful mix that's hard to part down, and Will knows it. □

Jazz & Improv

Reviewed by Julian Cowley

AL/BELOGENIS/MORRIS LIVE AT TONIC

DW 840 CD

"Tone Is In The House" declares the opener. Versions of John Coltrane's "Basinla" and "Spiritual" follow, and a track is also dedicated to Albert Ayler. From the outset, the music weaves to listen on its sleeve. Louie Belogenis, on tenor and soprano, has, for many years joined drummer Rashied Ali in the group Prima Materia to play tribute to those saxophone giants, and on this concert recording he continues to work animated variations from the sanctuaries of their long shadow. Wilber Morris is agile on bass, but the shows belong primarily to the unassailable Al. With the passage of time, free jazz playing has become prone to maintenance, but Al's drumming flows, as ever, from inner necessity.

WILLEM BREUKER THE PIRATE

BVHAART 0301 CD

The Prog rock group opening this excellent collection of previously unissued material from a 25 year period starting in 1969 is the first of numerous surprises. The music is a weaving time of allusions, parodic references and plundered riches embracing popular classics, rock 'n' roll, C.W., cabaret kitsch, mordant minimalism, vintage movie backing, TV themes and much else besides. They'll import into a driving jazz idiom open to bursts of free blowing. Breuker's daring, early arrangements reflect the scope of his fascination with popular forms, and he politically charged negotiations with the terms of mass taste. It's all executed with unwavering integrity and inventiveness by the saxophonist/composer and his longtime associates, plus Peter Bennink on bagpipes and a startling Balladeer choir.

ALBIN BRUN PILATUS

ALTRI SUONA ASSOCI CD

On this album, multi-instrumentalist Brun seeks to evoke various aspects of Pilatus mountain, near Lucerne, which he has known since childhood. Saxophones and accordion are his main resources, but he also plays guitar, piano, melodica and didgeridoo. Initially his impressions of Alpines, mountain mists, open vistas, village life and heeding exercise a certain charm, enhanced by the package illustrations, and they involve some truly playing. But at length the atmosphere grows rather dry. A mountain demands more than a snapshot, and Pilatus suffers from a surfeit of the picturesque.

BURT/MCDONALD 4 WITH LOL COXHILL TSUNAMI

NRK 933501 CD

Guitarist George Burt and saxophonist Raymond McDonald's quartet usually play breezy, tuneful jazz. But for this session at Glasgow's Foundry, they arrange themselves respectably around a few tracks. As they're evenly suited to such playing, the result is patchily successful.

The leaders evidently relish the occasion, but maybe they should have encouraged their versatile guest to join them on home ground, where he might have added some welcome pungency. The CD is dedicated to the memory of bassist Lindsay L Cooper.

JIM DENLEY & MARTIN NG VERGENCE

GROR 323X/CD9999 CD

This potent pairing of Denley's wind instruments and Martin Ng's turntables and CD player comes out of Sydney. Ng clicks and skips, quotes and blurs, and Denley does the same, often powered by a rather than an electricity. In groups such as Machine For Making Sense, Denley has been pushing in this direction for some years, working with radical discontinuity and serendipitous juxtapositions. Ng does all the expected gang, tactile things, but remains sufficiently flexible to keep the wind player keenly alert. If the turntable and CD player weren't conceived for this purpose, nor were the saxophone or flute. Limitations of intention don't apply here.

ELLERY ESKILIN VANISHING POINT

HATNOTLOGY 577 CD

Eskilín's music is always lean and purposeful and this teaming of his tenor with vibes and a string trio is no exception. Avoiding soft-centred wistfulness and the chilly austerity such combinations are prone to, he stays true to the tenor as a gutsy jazz instrument, while making the singular dynamics that make string chamber groups such effective units. Crucially, the music was entirely improvised. Eskilín's sinuous voice showing the way, with his high calibre players — Matt Moran (viola), Erik Friedlander (cello) and Mark Dresser (bass) — is in top pursuit. Matt Moran is the superbly tactful vibraphonist.

EZ POUR SPOUT DON'T SHAVE THE FEELING

LOVE SLAVE 104 CD

"We stand on the shoulders of giants," proclaims the cover. Doing the standing are Curtis Hasselbring, on trombone doubling guitar, Jamie Selt, on keyboards and lap steel guitar, with JA Gurevich and John Merzian making up the rhythm section, and Binger Krusee bowing alto. Supplying the shoulders are a motley crew including Kurt Cobain, Brad Bechhoeck, Mike Post and AC/DC. The quartet romp gleefully through a selection of favorite tunes from these real and ersatz icons. Led Zepplin's "Kashmir" receives a predictably spiced rendition, with Krusee in full flow, and Frank Zappa's "My Guitar" sounds off the set. Zappa's spirit materialises elsewhere, when the grin grows broadest. The group's real tie to "Don't Take My Eyes Off Of You" could be a signal for America to disk up and go home.

JOHANSSON/DÖRNER/ NEUMANN BARCELONA SERIES

HATNOTLOGY 594 CD

This is the first surfaced in Barcelona, but these 11 tracks were recorded in Berlin in 1999. Andrea

Neumann plays piano harp, a stark, strung cast-iron flange. Axel Dörner plays trumpet and Sven-Erik Johansson drums, but the trio too are stripped down, conceptually, so this music has an oddity and a fondness for. Dörner indulges in a few obviously melodic musings; otherwise they leave an impression of mechanics working tools, quietly addressing the task in hand. Johansson aims to minimise expressiveness, to sidestep virtuosity. The result is strangely gripping, like witnessing a process that evidently absorbs the participants but whose outcome remains under to onlookers. Anyone tired of bluster and indulgence should try this honed down and engagingly self-contained work of assemblage.

RENÉ LUSSIER DEBOUTONNE

OHM EDITIONS ANTHROPO 02 CD

These 13 improvisations by Lussier on acoustic guitar are predominantly dry in tone and draw on an extensive repertoire of techniques, many retrieved from Derek Bailey's alpacas. The solos are neatly constructed, but what differentiates Deboutonne from comparable investigations is the recording technique. Eight microphones were used to capture the performance. The mix derived from these multiple sources produces a cubistic picture of the guitarist in action. Obviously, listening on headphones is recommended for attuning fully into the field, where the single instrument is reflected out, assuming a distinctive acoustic character at each point of reception.

NILS PETTER MOLVER RECOLOURED: THE REMIX ALBUM

EMERGEY 015691 CD

Norwegian Ambient trumpeter Molver's ECM album *Solid Earth* is given an overhaul by assorted remix demons, including Deathprod, Jan Bang, Fankabanger and Bill Lawwell. Molver's alluring fusion sprang from dual sources: engagement with the possible worlds charted by Miles Davis, Jan Hassell and Don Cherry, and fascination with the vertiginous rhythms conjured by Basement Jaxx. Remixed, the softness of the original album continues to seep through the updated beats, although the new employees let out its seductive appeal.

STEVE NELSON-RANEY & JON MUELLER CUTTING OFF THE EDGE OF TIME

PENUMBRA 011 CD

The album title is taken from neglected Bert post Bob Kaufman. Track titles boldly collide adjectives and nouns: "Tilting Gardens," "Steel Nostalgia," "Untamed Crucifixions." The music is completely a matter of flexing, clenching interplay. Nelson-Raney, based in Milwaukee, lectures in jazz studies and is a regular associate of multi-instrumentalist Hal Rammel. He plays jazz, resilient tenor lines, hard-bop memories unravelling into freedom. Mueller, drummer with the group Pole, is equally unorthodox, making from a crisp, edgy and at times laconic feel.

ANDY SHEPPARD & KATHRYN TICKELL MUSIC FOR A NEW CROSSING

PHONO/CAREER PXC0001 CD

Music North invited saxophonist Sheppard and Northumbrian pipe Tickell to mark last month's opening of the Gateshead Millennium Bridge. On their three-piece start, embellished with sounds of gusts and river traffic, Sheppard plays with customary facility and grace, while Tickell imaginatively adapts her traditional instrument to contemporary ends. Such commissions carry implicit constraints and the music is for sale than Paul Dunsall's folk-jazz amalgam, for instance. Still, there's enough fine playing and verbiage of mood to sustain its 20 minute span.

BIGGI VINKELOE & BARRE PHILLIPS MAGHZEN

SLASH 033 CD

Vinkeloe has a distinctive voice on alto sax and flute. Her phrasing is often more indebted to speech patterns than musical precedents. Confiding and intimate, or emphatic and urgent, she makes her point convincingly, reticent, changes tack and then returns with a new slant, like a skilled conversationalist. Bassist Phillips is superbly skilled in such exchanges, gauging his responses with unerring judgment. An object lesson in refined phrasing, steering Vinkeloe towards increased eloquence.

JACK WRIGHT PLACES TO GO

SPRING GARDEN MUSIC SG04003 CD

Idealistic and obscure, Wright is held in some esteem by players such as fellow saxophonist Bobo Rang, trumpeter Greg Kelley and percussionist Eric Rosenbalt. Based in Boulder, Colorado, Wright has played sax for 50 years, and devoted himself to free improvisation for the past two decades. His impulse has been to let it all out without concessions, but on this solo set he forgoes raw expression, approaching soprano, alto and tenor with curiosity and attentiveness. Employing an idiom of slurs, snarls, jagged stabs and growls, each piece investigates what the instrument has to say in response to Wright's astute probing.

PETER ZUMMO & TOM HAMILTON SLYBERTRONIC TROMBOSONE

PENUMBRA 007 CD

Trombonist Zummo has been performing his own music alone and in various ensembles since 1967. He often worked with the late Arthur Russell, and in 1996 appeared on partner Hamilton's *Off Hour West State* (DD Discs), an album about New York's subway. Hamilton plays synthesizer and electronics, clinging defiantly to an analogue aesthetic that guarantees copious blares, clangs, swirls and steeply rising or descending lines. Zummo favors firm and frisky articulations, drawing fragments of melody inlaid with Hamilton's abstracting. An uncommon instrumental pairing, the seasoned downtown improvisers form an unusually stimulating duo. □

Outer Limits

Reviewed by Jim Haynes

ACID MOTHER'S TEMPLE & THE MELTING PARASO UFO 41ST CENTURY SPLENDID MAN TUMULT TUMPTOT LP

The ever prolific Makoto Kawabata continues to receive glowing visions from the cosmic powers that be, channelling them through the psychedelic medium of The Acid Mother's Temple: producing a profusion series of limited edition picture discs published by HUMULI Industries, 41st Century Splendid Man finds Kawabata shifting historical allegiances away from lysergic guru Father Yod and towards Japanese ittpw legends The Taj Mahal Travellers. Extended drones from a bowed sitar, sarangi and wabi sat an eerie, opium den mood of hazy atmospheres and slow moving, clanking rhythms, coming close to the somber ceremonial music of The Sams, one of Kawabata's other ensembles. The rest of the album picks up the pace considerably with flanging analogue synths increasing their modulated frequencies until AMT explodes into a propulsive space rock jam, led by expressive improvisations from The Ruins' percussionist Tatsuya Yoshida.

COH LOVE UNCUT EP ESKATON 35 CD

Love Uncut is a timely second EP collaboration between Coh and members of Coh, in light of the release of the latter's *Love's Secret Domain*. Love has collaborators, Coh (aka Ivan Pablos) presents pseudo-scientific observations of hidden phenomena (planetary motions, computer glitches, cellular structures) as allegories of transgressive behaviour. While credited as a cover of Soft Cells' "Meet Murder My Angel", the opening track — with Coh's Peter Christopherson masterfully whispering "I haven't felt this good in a long time" behind subterranean drags and loosely structured electronics — could easily be an update of CoS's "Seaweed Worker's Birthday Party" (from their debut album, *Scatology*). Coh follows up with a cover of Vicious Pink's sexually explicit B0s club anthem, "Fetish". Coh has dropped the big disco beats and whp cracks, but retains the terse New Wave synth arpeggiations, albeit forced into a Raster-Noton/Pan Sonic electronic squish. John Balance figures on the closing, glynn punned "Heart And Offcency: Love's Septic Dream". Behind Balance's luscious rappings about "risky hospitals", Coh generates a series of terse mechanical riffs and distorted analogue tones as good as anything Coh themselves have done.

GEROGERIEGE NOME FRIENDLYE MINK MUSIC CD

"GeroGeriege" translates from the cutti's native Japanese as "Glori! Garmen! Hal! Hal! Hal!", signalling their verbal acceptance of their role as the ultimate self-parody of Japanese noise culture. Not only do they embrace the Philistine ignorance that noise music is shit, they also create it through masturbation. While many have passed through the group, GeroGeriege's most infamous line-up spans the 50 year old

salaryman Gero 50 jerking off, while frontman Jurjuro Yamanaka manifests a delirious amount of blistered feedback and distortion. That said, Nome Friendly is a surprising release from Jurjuro who has stepped well beyond the juvenile humour of bodily fluids into the meditative states of pure minimalism. The 50 minute piece steadily cycles through the quiet modulation of controlled feedback, humming like the complex closed loop systems from Arcane Device over a decade ago.

BERNHARD GÜNTHER CROSSING THE RIVER (NIGHT MUSIC) NIGHT CHALK/TAUTOCITY CD

Günter has dedicated his latest composition *Crossing The River (Night Music)* to the recently deceased Lewis Xenakis, although he remains steadfast in extending the ideas from Morton Feldman's late period out of a chamber ensemble and into the language of abstract electronics. Günter has reportedly denied the use of traditional instrumentation, in favour of computer processed recordings of everyday events. Yet on this album his delicate procession of sustained tones filled with rich, sonorous timbres could be plausible replications of Robert Rattman's steel coils, or an abce, or even a slightly mutated melodic. He gives each of these elements plenty of space to resonate, before presenting another discrete tone. These sombre vibrations are cast under a dark shadow, as he gradually introduces an eerie Ambient den resembling a distant fax of receding tidal patterns. As in all of his work, time takes on an uncanny morphology crawling at an incredibly slow pace, but the sounds appearing in this timeframe are so mesmerizing as to leave me wondering where the last 45 minutes went. *Crossing The River* is arguably Günter's finest composition to date.

HECATE THE MAGICK OF FEMALE EJACULATION ZHUANG/PAKIS ZHUANG/PAKIS CD/BOX P

More of the darkness drum 'n' bass influenced by Passions and Ace: Empire runs the risk of becoming a parody of its own bombastic punk pretenses, and Hecate's *The Magick Of Female Ejaculation* is no exception. Like Digital Hardcore's *Heaven* above, Hecate Elias and Cobra Killec Hecate (aka Rachael Killec) broadcast a transgressive feminism through the lurid noise rants of the Gothic aesthetic and the lowbrow peace of love, post-Riotism 900 kbps. While she displays a serious arsenal of stalling, breakbeats and distorted, howling melodies on a par with anything on OHR or Plasteration, Hecate predictably drops in hackneyed samples of "Violence, Violence! Death, Death!" (on "We Are Family") or "Genuine severe blood, genuine dead people!" (on "Neuroasthetics") to announce the pending explosion of digital noise. Such juvenile anarchy of subversion will never serve her well, if she sincerely aspires to delve into the mysteries of feminine lust or the psychology of a sexual predator.

JOE JONES SOLAR MUSIC AT SIERKS DORF, RECORDS 720005 BO CD

An active member of the European Fluxus community up until his death in 1992, Joe Jones produced a number of self-automated music machines which achieved to George Mason's instructions that the Fluxus artist, "must demonstrate the self-sufficiency of the audience, and must demonstrate that anything can be art and anyone can do it". For his *Solar Music* performance on a north German beach, Jones set up a large tambo drum, two tamboresses and a zither, all played by solar-panel controlled motor. While the Hundermarkt Gallery which publishes 7 Records has provided no biographical information (but to the intent of Fluxus as an artform for Everybody), Jones reportedly tied his hands during these performances to ensure that he could not interfere. *Solar Music* features a series of slightly offbeat rhythms phasing in and out of synchronization over the top of a glittering drone shammer that recalls a lighter tribute to Organum's bowed symbols. Subject to weather changes during this early morning performance, discs occasionally slow down and stop the mechanical churning and ethereal drones.

KHANATE KHANATE SOUTHERN LORD SUNNED CD

Following his glitch meets grimecore summit in *Atomshaker*, experimental Ambient guitarist James Priden continues his return to his Metal roots with the crushing doom of *Khanate*. Stephen O'Malley (Sun OUI, Burning Witch), Tim Wyckind (Bad Idea Good) and Alan Oulu (on 'vicki' jam Priden in a supragroup of digger-monsters. Huge, ploddingiffs stalk their debut album, punctuated by feedback wails that announce another massive monolithic attack of drones, guitar and bass, sounding not unlike Cap-em Swans or early Neurosis. Also handling the knob twiddling, Priden immerses *Khanate* in a surprisingly rich sound, its cavernous reverberations countering its heavy textual grip of distortion and dissonance.

ROTSOPE GREAT CURVES JESSE TRACK 010 CD

Emerging from the Norwegian jazz scene, Andreas Mjøs formed Rotsope as an electronic fusion of structured jazz and digital beats. The standard structures of pop, jazz and drum 'n' bass. From the onset, Rotsope offer the hint that each sound element — from Christine Scudron's glitch vocals to dense percussion grooves for mamba and drums, and quacking tenor sax and bass clarinet saxes — had originally been conceived as a quick jazz pop. However, Mjøs and co-producer Jørgen Trædal turn what might have turned out as ECM-fueled dinner jazz into a dizzying Tigerbait's digital chop job. They augment the play between the low performance and the digitized fragment with disparate slabs of drum 'n' bass components.

TANAKA NIXON MEETING TWELVE INCHES HEVEN HELLS HALF MILD HMM 15 LP

The Dead C's Michael Morley making references to "down right dirty funk in the sun" is almost as uselessly as a contemporary politician "showing" down props to its own. As in his last few Gate recordings, The Tanaka Nixon Meeting, Morley's work with fellow New Zealand dancer Danny Butt, clumsily embed samples of Amen breakers, The Aphex Twin and Reinhard Voigt in dense tape hiss. The formula works during the album's maximal moments, where once crystalline forms of Morislow are muddled into techno thrills and grimy atmospheres. Yet with its cacophonous drum 'n' bass samples, the rest of the album's rhythms are weary and searish. Maybe Morley just hasn't gotten the hang of electronics.

VARIOUS NART NIBBLES NICHEN MOTORS KMO3 2XCD

Reykjavik's Kitchens Mote — the cross-pollinating arts organization run by Kristín Björk Kristjánstóttir and Jóhan Jóhannsson — caught to be the envy of New York, London and San Francisco. Not only have they presented an impressive roster of international artists (Don Buchla, Trevor Wishart, Bernhard Günter), they have also advanced Iceland's own exuberant experimental art scene with a monthly series of performances. *Nart Nibbles* is the third documentation of such KM events. *Khanate's* Apparat Organ Quartet open with downtrodden camp music pitched between Bo Hansson and Tom Waits. Spennaviddid offer grinding Iron Maiden riffers with swarming electronic tones and a contrasted slawer. But the highlight of the two CD sets is the *Hovits* Symphony No. 1 (10 Electric Guitars), based on the basic tonality of an E chord. Unlike Glenn Branca's orchestration, which unnecessarily chug at the same E chord, this ensemble (featuring Kristjánstóttir as well as Sigríðir Jón Pír Björgsson) move between melancholy drones and majestic crescendos with ease. Mum, Big Bend Brutal and Hilarious Jensen, among others, round out an exceptional collection.

VARIOUS SHOCK CITY SHOCKERS VOL 2 SHOCK CITY/FOURTH SHOCKCITY SHOCKCITY RECORDS CD

Rather than hastily follow his first collection of Brechtian-related works with more of the same, the second in Matsuzaka Eye's Shock City series is essentially a remix album for OROO, the all women group led by Brechtian storm trooper P-We. In keeping with OROO's playful *Gen & Gold*, Vol 2 extrapolates excessive candy-colored psychedelics from P-We's breathy vocalizations and whimsical techno rock. On "Be Sure To Loop", Masuzaka Tatsu is one of the few remakes to retain a piece of the original structure, interlocking its New! rhythms with Terry Riley phase shifts. Eye recreates OROO's "Assasin" as a Caribbean mambo groove in the round. L7N707, Miyoshi Izumi, Nobuko Takekuma, KURO, Kuchikawa and OROO also contribute. □

Print Run

New music books devoured, dissected, dissed

WESTERN MUSIC AND ITS OTHERS: DIFFERENCE, REPRESENTATION AND APPROPRIATION IN MUSIC
GEORGINA BORN & DAVID HESMONDHALGH (EDITORS)
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS Pbk £19.95
BY BEN WATSON

The relationship of music to politics is potentially interesting, and the wide range of this collection – there are essays on Arabesque pop in British slams, 'Red Indian' motifs in Western soundtracks, Béla Bartók's field research, Jewish liturgical composition in pre-war Vienna, the use and abuse of pygmy music from Nerthe Hancock's Headlines to Neutopia commercials – promises an absorbing and informative read. However, these fascinating materials are rarely allowed to speak for themselves. As may be guessed from the title, the editors are importing concepts from post-colonial studies into musicology, so everything is riddled in the 'theory' that certain academics have generated around the work of Michel Foucault and Edward Said – jagged, indirect, paradoxical, hysterically tendentious, politically indeterminate and grandly apologetic.

The 56 page introduction by the editors is extraordinarily off-putting. For some reason – could it be a lack of anything substantial to say? – it summarises all the essays, complicating and problematising their findings into still more tortuous tangles. Abstract, overlong sentences seek to give various ideas fixes the high time of theory. Avant garde atonality and popular tunefulness are cast as 'completely antithetical', whereas anyone who pursues music outside the class divide imposed by the BBC knows this is a

patronising myth. Where, for example, do Ornette Coleman fit in, indeed, the book's cover star Herbie Hancock sit? The cart terms 'the Other', 'difference' and 'identity' are imposed willy nilly on every situation, achieving precisely the 'impersonal of concepts' they are meant to unrock. The editors claim the book 'is a departure in its attempt to think through these issues in relation to several disciplines' as if the Frankfurt School – founded precisely to bulldoze academic distinctions between musicology, philosophy, economics and psychology – never existed. A fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, Georgina Born's 'anti-elitism from on top' has the slightly unreal quality of New Labour apoc.

Sourced from the self-immolating *Reds* journal *Massim* today, Born's politics are anti-artist and neo-liberal, leading to distorting summaries of essays by Julie Brown and Martin Stokes. Brown sticks close enough to historical facts to demonstrate that, in the light of discussions with the Marxist revolutionary George Lukács and German musicologist Heinrich Müller, Bartók revised his views on gypsy folk music, ascribing its vapidity to its role in flattening the gentry class rather than its racial origin. For Born, still nagging the tired horse of postmodernism, 'Left mass culture critique' is always a mystic manifestation of modernist evil. As in post-colonial studies, past thinkers are assigned before a tribunal of today's political correctness: the historical actuality of ideas worked out during collective debate is never acknowledged. To describe the aftermath of the Nato-backed coup in Turkey in 1980 as 'economic liberalisation and political populism under a Cerrito-Turkish government' ignores the

military's assassination and imprisonment of Marxist intellectuals and trade unionists. It blunts the thrust of Stokes's essay, which has a footnote describing how intellectuals in Turkey need to hide the fact that they own books. Born is always ready to play the card of liberal guilt – she concludes her introduction with an abstract call to 'anesthetic modes of power' – but nevertheless emerges on the reactionary side in any conflict.

The *Postcard Academy* founded by Simon Fith has always played obsequious, pseudo-scholarly games with footnotes, but the introduction here surely takes the biscuit. Born betrays herself no less than four times, the last one tagged with 'As Born has proposed, this requires a social semiotics of music adequate to the analysis of music as culture, as a complex multimedial object in history.' All very well to propose, but the problem is that Born's structuralist anthropology never actually gets round to discussing music (which is presumably why she decided to edit a collection by other people).

Post-colonialism dictates that there can be no moment of virtue for the culture of the speaker (which is assumed to be that of a non-white 'oppressed West'). Hence, there's no space for avant garde resistance, following the spirited polemic of prairie fan Pac's recent programme notes, I would argue that Michael Finnissy's *Baranibar* (1982) represents a real encounter with aboriginal soundtracking, utterly unaltered by exotism or imperialism. The raw impact of aboriginal ritual – its shock – becomes a revolutionary question. Similarly, the history of blues and jazz has been one of subverting capitalist moves from within. Being emanant

developments, reducible to the 'identity/other' binary, musics like these get no mention. These academics may feel endlessly guilty about the fact, but they can only condescend towards the music they study – categorise it, define it, but never learn from it in the way Adorno learned from Arnold Schoenberg, or Lilla Jones from John Coltrane.

The book isn't an entirely lost cause. David Hesmondhalgh's report on interval debates at Naxos Records – home of Transglobal Underground, Naxos Atlas and Fun On Mental – is smart and informative, more interested in the recent label as an interventionist cultural practice than in the tedious paradoxes of post-colonial 'theory'. As an academic junior to Born, one suspects that his role in the collection was administrative rather than ideological, although co-signed, the introduction doesn't bear any traces of his refreshingly plain style.

The only contributor who refuses to allow the self-flagellating chain of post-colonial studies to block a personal response is John Corbett. His paper here is a joy. He explains why Jay McInerney's Fourth World Ambient is both politically and musically flawed, and criticises a trade against ethnic minority from Derek Bailey's *Improvisation: Its Nature And Practice In Music* (1987) which will make you bow with laughter. He also insists, it matters that Clive Bell has studied the shakuhachi with such devotion, and he won't allow post-colonial jargon about 'the Other' to block admiration of his playing. His discussion of John Zorn's relationship to Japan is original, nuanced and troubled – is real Once we're free of the pseudo-political postures incumbent on academic indifference, writing on music can become realistic and poignant. □

ADVENTURES ON THE WHEELS OF STEEL: THE RISE OF THE SUPERSTAR DIS
DAVE HASLAM
FOURTH ESTATE Pbk £8.99
BY JULIA HOU

Paul Van Dyk likes his. He's not much of a drinker, preferring instead a good soft drink, maybe a tomato juice when he's feeling queasy. And doesn't even get me started on what songs those lucky Chemical Brothers brought to play at Norman Cook's wedding.

This is the type of minutiae that makes Dave Haslam's *Adventures On The Wheels Of Steel* a light and extremely readable report on today's fatality of international DJ superstars. It's also why he earned, loving work ultimately leaves you wanting more. It's essentially a 200 page treatise for a potentially fun day in the life of a night out with Europe's finest track jockeys. *Adventures* consists of 11 chapters, each of which finds us in a different venue taking a different DJ. Though one wishes he had ventured outside of Europe,

his choices are surprisingly diverse, effortlessly ranging from Sasha to a Northern Soul night.

Haslam takes some interesting liberties in his town to look search for that mystical je ne sais quist of DJing. We gain and bear the true wrinkles of a touching amateur night vignette. Drift by the wall (all alone, of course) while watching sad people try to act happy at a Smiths tribute night. Jimmy Saville struts toward us, all pomp and circumstance and pomade. Sadly, the book does not include any photos.

The problems start when he and his abrupt prose take it to the stage with 'The Gods'. Superstardom by default (and by dint of drugs), people like Sasha, Paul 'Oakey' Oakenfold and Fatboy Slim just aren't interesting on paper. Perhaps this has to do with Haslam's aversion to leaving anything out: rather than editing his interviews and painting better profiles, he packs each chapter with boring details hardly worth transcribing the first time around. Fatboy, apparently, favours the pseudonym Michael Fish, after the UK weather forecast 'You've come a

long way baby.

Of course you wonder whether the fault lies in Haslam or his subjects. For all his glib, rookster, 'look for a leaning from behind the DJ booth', Fatboy Slim's generally domestic settings won't have anyone confusing him for a long lost Gallagher brother. And the section on Van Dyk's consumption of solo and muscade speaks for itself. On one hand, you wish Haslam would just go full force and air all the dirty little secrets his all-access badge must have entitled him to. But maybe subtlety and marriage are all there was, and *Adventures*' little namewares are faithful to their subjects. Nation, for example, how much livelier the chapter on the eccentric Jimmy Saville is, compared to his one on the glam Smiths revive in Manchester.

His might be the new rock stars, but they're so damn boring. Jimmy Hendrix winked his fingers over the little ball of fire that was his guitar, knowing that the magic was in him, not the implement. Sasha keeps his magic locked up in a tight-seal record box. Isn't that sort of one

mythology has any more merit than the other, that DJs aren't real musicians. But you have to wonder why DJs have suddenly become royalty. Does their elevation signal a popular shift in taste, or is it simply a product of rock's boredom and our need for heroes? Haslam paints a compelling 'before' and 'after' picture of DJ culture's ascension, but he never gets to the question of the 'rise' promised in his title.

Back to the Smiths night, there's an interesting moment when Haslam approaches this question while talking to a DJ about Morrissey's hatred of 'DJ' culture. Haslam chances upon a pretty important point, groping for that moment when Big Beat became the new Britpop, when rock's genealogy replaced Morrissey with Tom and Ed. Chemical. That is, the moment when it became unnecessary to refer to Norman Cook as a 'former member of The Housemartins', because nobody cared that their anymore. Love 'em, leave 'em or let 'em bore you to def, DJs are our new heroes. At least until new music makes that much-run-around comeback. □



Can't find my way home: Syd Barrett

**RANDOM PRECISION:
RECORDING THE MUSIC OF
SYD BARRETT 1965-1974**

BY DAVID PARKER

CHERRY RED PBK \$14.99

BY EDWIN POUNCEY

Syd (born Roger Keith) Barrett was the original singer/songwriter and lead guitarist for Pink Floyd in the mid-60s, until his obsessive intake of hallucinogenics and the resulting severe mental problems caused the group to replace him with guitarist Dave Gilmour. Whether they could have achieved the platinum album, stadium rock status they acquired in the 70s with founder Barrett still at the helm now seems wildly improbable. Yet a flourishing cult following quickly built up around him after his departure. Founded

on his one full album with Pink Floyd (the excellent *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn* — he contributed little to their second, *A Saucerful Of Secrets*), plus his two solo LPs, *The Madcap Laughs* and *Barrett*, and a later collection of unreleased tracks and outtakes, *Opel*, the cult thrives on its holy grail quest for a possible new recording from their reclusive idol. The chances of their dream ever becoming a reality are as remote as the man himself, who now lives with his mother in Cambridge. With no new music to look forward to, Barrett's fans have had to content themselves with shoddy bootlegs, tribute albums and numerous books speculating about his life and music.

At least David Parker's book largely sticks to the facts. A former co-editor of the Barrett fanzine

Chapter 24, Parker has gathered the details of Syd's recording sessions and live performances, with Pink Floyd and as a solo artist. He presents his information diary fashion, interspersing the recording data with interviews (in some cases, every pause and stammer is faithfully transcribed) from various managerial, record company technicians and contemporary witnesses to add some much needed pincol colour to the otherwise dusty proceedings. If there's nothing here that the initiated won't have read elsewhere, Parker's fragmented text does turn up some revealing moments. We are told, for instance, that Barrett got the riff for "Interstellar Overdrive" after hearing Floyd manager Pete Jenner crudely humming Love's version of Burt Bacharach's "Little Red Book" to him. We also

learn that Barrett was much influenced by the techniques of AMM guitarist Keith Rowe (well, AMM briefly shared management with Pink Floyd). The more fascinating, if ugly revelations in *Random Precision*, however, are the tales of Barrett's later decline. Such as how he was bundled into a taxi and sent home by a company hoping to rescue something from the debris of a rambling Syd studio session after, it is reported, he was vacant, uncommunicative and "didn't really want to be there". Once again, witnessing the madness of Saint Syd kicking in makes for an uncomfortable, slightly voyeuristic experience. Readers will ultimately crawl away from Parker's authoritative book with the almost unclear feeling of learning more about its subject than was really necessary. □

Ether Talk

Dispatches from the digital domain

Chris Abbott's homages to 80s Commodore 64 game music preserve a breakthrough in sound chip science. By Peter Shapiro



Left to right: Emily Booth with Commodore 64, SID sound chip, theme tune curator Chris Abbott, C64 game action

If you're a pop fan or just a dedicated sadomasochist, you might remember Zombie Nation's "Kernkraft 400" (a number two UK hit last autumn). Its lurching main riff was taken from the theme tune (composed by a David Whittaker) of a mid-80s Commodore 64 computer game called Lazy Jones. While records have been sampling video game noises for a couple of decades now, "Kernkraft 400" represented something different. The first widespread flowering of a score that has been quietly developing below virtually every cultural radar since the 80s. Ever since those halcyon days of Lazy Jones, Boulder Dash, Sanson and Crazy Castles, kids and otherwise sensible adults have been collecting, trading and remaking C64 tunes, creating Websites that house interviews with their adolescent heroes, and organizing live events where vintage computers mix with their adoring flock.

Invented in 1982, the Commodore 64 was the first computer to be equipped with an integrated synthesizer chip, the SID (Sound Interface Device). It may have been, even in context of the synthesizing standards of the era, incredibly simple — the chip had three synth voices, each consisting of an oscillator, amplitude modulator and envelope generator, plus a programmable filter — but compared to the monstrosities bleeps of the early personal computers and gaming units its effect was similar to the way people will react when Synthesizer and Ensoniq release a mobile phone capable of playing a sample of The

Strokes' "TV Eye" as its engine instead of a connect-the-dots version of "La Cucaracha." The SID is a synthesizer chip without an operating system" explains Chris Abbott, one of the leading lights of the C64 scene. "Like any sound source, once it was in the hands of gifted programmers with musical ideas, it created sounds that had a unique quality, and each composer sounded radically different, since they had to create their own sounds and players from scratch... To see simple hardware pushed into such amazing sounds was an awesome experience. Sharing this appreciation with my friends at the time was a big part of it, of course, we collected C64 tunes like other kids bought T-shirts, and to us the composers were popstars. After all, they were musicians; they should only record company approved artists and film stars but the only ones you're allowed to love? On the C64, the only thing standing between you and the music produced by the professional composers was their coding knowledge and skill. You and the composer had exactly the same hardware, no excuses. I wanted to be a game musician. Ironically, the hero worship of these composers led a lot of impressive young kids into game music programming just as the whole thing went corporate."

Abbott has been doing covers of C64 game themes since 1988 using a simple four-track. In 1994 he started C64Audio.com, which circulated MIDI files, and later MP3s, of his and others'

remakes of C64 anthems by people like Whittaker, Rob Hubbard, Martin Galway, Chris Huelsbeck and Jensen Leif. In 1997 he released the first CD of these remakes, Back In Time. But if the originals were so great, why release remakes rather than the 8-bit masterpieces themselves? "For me, the original tunes were exercises in compromise," Abbott declares. "Sure, the 10-bit sound was part of the charm, but there was always the knowledge that the composer sometimes meant something bigger. As a fan of the musical content, there were certain pieces where it would have been a criminal waste of resources not to refine the piece in the way the composer meant it to sound, such as orchestrally or as synth-electropop, dance or whatever. Where necessary, we keep the SID sound to convey the same spirit of the original but with improved backing. Some people would prefer that it all remain SID, but I believe those people are missing the beauty of the actual musical content of the pieces. It was always about the sounds and the music, not just the sounds. Unfortunately it's easier and quicker just to fixate on the sounds for that retro fix."

If that sounds a bit Jean-Michel Jarre to you (admittedly some of the music is very Jarre-ny), earlier this year Techno label Locomot released a collection of C64 music as it was originally composed, Input 64: A Collection Of Commodore 64 Game Music: 1984-1989, and a collection of remakes from Opti Bastards, Steve Clayton from Add N To It, Dweez and Joana Team called

Output 64. These both concentrate on the wonder, raw electro side of things with smattering of retro charm. For the non-dedicated this is probably the best place to start, but Abbott doesn't necessarily approve. "It's pleasing that a major record company has decided to invest in this sort of thing — and I've actually been involved in licensing them tracks to appear on it," he says, "but it's hard to see the tunes making any new friends in their original form. There's very little bass to speak of, for instance. How can you have dance music without sub-bass? I'm a huge fan of C64 music, but it's not something you play in most company if you know what I mean. Back then the people who liked this music were able to see beyond the limitations. And because the sounds were abstract and organic — thanks to some dodgy hardware engineering which meant that each tune was played differently by each individual computer — they were interpreted differently by each listener, which is what makes the entire scene so interesting. Most people are used to getting sounds and production on a plate; they don't have to work at it. So when something like a C64 tune comes along, it's judged harshly because it requires a lot of creative effort from the listener." Input 64 and Output 64 are out now on Endless/Locomot. Websites: www.hsc.c64.org (huge archive of original C64 songs), maddox.phatstuffs.de (C64 zine with interviews, features, news, etc), www.c64audio.com (Chris Abbott's site)

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In response to the 11 September crisis, Dariusz Kozłowski & Naomi Yang, formerly of 80s space-rock trio Galactic 500, got up, into the act and evolved by setting up **Musicians 4 Peace** (www.musicians4peace.org). Proclaiming "We are not afraid to make noise," the rapid-response site acts as a global information hub for musicians sharing the belief that "we do not support this war. Violence only leads to further violence; war is not the answer." Signed by a long list of musicians including Thurston Moore, Richard Hell, Ghosts Machine, Balthaz and Pearl Before Snow, the site contains an articles library, a news page, plus links to all media and independent news resources.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the Atlantic, British tour promoter **Contemporary Music**

Network (www.cmtours.org.uk) is preparing to celebrate 30 years of activity. The whole month of November sees continuous radio programming via New Music organisation **Unknown Public's** new 24-seven online broadcast network (www.unknownpublicradio.com). Among the goodies will be documentaries and streamed archive recordings featuring the likes of Carol Greves, Trevor Wishart, Michael Nyman, The Heat, David Toop, John Tibbitts, Lydia Lunch, Tony Dohy, Steve Reich and many more. And if you fancy yourself as a radio programmer, you, the unknown public, can select tracks from the archive, assemble a playlist of your own and submit it to the Website for consideration. If they like it, they'll broadcast it. Themed programme strands include presentations dedicated to each

year of CMN between 1971-2001, including pieces on the Carlow League, American experimental music, misanthropy and New Complexity, and, wait for it, "Can serious music be fun?"

Not to be mistaken with Manchester label **Skam** (www.skam.co.uk), **The Skam** (www.skam.co.uk) is a whole different affair. This playing, mutating Website is a combination of electronics gossip, interviews, reviews and Real Audio clips all bundled together in a heavily Photoshopped virtual environment. Most of the written content is fairly light-hearted, and for those with a text connection there are videoclips with interviews (now playing: Gonzales/Peaches associate Mucky).

ANNE HILDE RESET

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Quacking up: Stockhausen

**KARLHEINZ STOCKHAUSEN:
ELEKTRONIK
LONDON BARBICAN HALL**

UK

BY PHILIP CLARK

These are difficult days to be Karlheinz Stockhausen. His stupid and insensitive pronouncements on events at the World Trade Center seem to have confirmed his status as a naive and tragicomic figure who has long since lost touch with his own critical faculties. Performances of the arcane ragbag collection of pieces that make up his ongoing *Licht* cycle are dangled in front of Stockhausen's nose as bait to persuade him to put in personal appearances. After all, he's become a self-manufactured cult and the Stockhausen brand name can fill a concert hall. But promoters are more interested in his past. The Stockhausen emporium — like the Van Tripp family of contemporary music — must therefore tour the world with his back catalogue and hope some past glories rub off on a vacuous present.

True to form, the *Elektronik* weekend at the Barbican did offer us one opera from the unfinished *Licht*, but was otherwise focused on the 50s and 60s. *Hymnen* was completed in 1967 and the vastness of its carefully sculpted electronic soundscapes made a potent expression on a captivated audience, with Stockhausen

himself moving the pieces through a surround sound system of his own design. Lasting two hours, the work subsumes hundreds of national anthems and feels like a slowly moving satellite that's poking its antennae into the world's radio stations. The message of the piece may be a rather wily-wacky comment on the universal global village, but its real power lies in Stockhausen's transformation of the utterly familiar into something that sounds undeniably extraordinary. But he rejects the term 'collage', preferring his own word 'insmodulation'. As he writes in the programme notes, "Many-sided interrelationships have been composed among the various anthems... the rhythm of one anthem is modulated with the harmony of another; this result is modulated with the dynamic envelope of a third anthem... finally such an event is given a specific spatial modulation."

The first 'region' travels from the 'Internationale' through the 'Marseillaise' and then on to the German national anthem, in which the old East German anthem is heard as a ghostly, lichen shadow. These prosaic themes are stretched beyond the point of recognition into acid electronic mud. Counterpoint is often provided by vastly speeded up national that darts from speaker to speaker as it flies around the heads of the audience. It is a sort of rare wit in Stockhausen's music; the 'Marseillaise' is

quashed out by a chorus of electronically created ducks as they fly out of audibility.

The idea of sound and flight is a recurrent theme in Stockhausen's music. The famous brass chords that ricochet from orchestra to orchestra in *Gruppen* have wings, as do the members of the *Arditi* Quartet in his *Helicopter Quartet*. Stockhausen spoke about this correlation relating back to a childhood experience of lying in a meadow watching low-flying aircraft. He then effortlessly moved on to talk about the American anthems in region three of *Hymnen* without having the humility to make the all too obvious connection that everyone in the audience was anticipating.

In a period, regions three and four contain more source material but seem less disparate as Stockhausen cranks up the tone of his authorial voice. The American section pous African and European anthems into the Star Spangled Banner in an aesthetically obvious but musically effective representation of the 'melting pot'. National stereotyping characterises the Swiss as 'flirt' and their national anthem is speeded up to the power of eight to become an organic display piece. Then we move to the roots of the New Age, ego driven psycho-babble that is all Stockhausen has left these days. Out of the last chord of the Swiss hymn forms 'an anthem of the utopian realm of *Mymnon* in *Hymnoid*

Under Pivernon' which eventually leads to 'the breathing of all mankind'. Michael Tippett also uses the sound of human breath in his *Symphony No 4*. But the fact that it's at the beginning suggests Tippett moving from the universal to the personal. As Stockhausen is at the centre of Stockhausen's world, he puts himself before the breathing of mankind.

24 hours later and a concert of Stockhausen's greatest hits — *Glosser Der Jünglinge*, *Telemusik* and *Kontakte* — performed similarly to *Hymnen* but not quite so dramatically. I can remember going to an almost identical event ten years ago in the same hall and even his pre-performance patter seemed oddly familiar. Of course there's nothing wrong with bringing these pieces to audiences who might not have heard them before. But once you've seen the show and admired his pioneer spirit, the pieces themselves feel like *sepi* reminiscences of an era long gone. Throughout the weekend I was reminded of Frank Sinatra's farewell tours — those triumphs of celebrity over substance in which he croaked his way through standards before the inevitable and gruesome rendition of 'My Way'. Some even seemed confused as to who, or what, the sight of this elderly but sprightly man dressed in gleaming white from head to toe meant. "Is it a group or a man?" someone asked. "Sunno," came the reply. "But his beard are crisp!" ☐

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BY DAVE MANDL

In response to the 11 September World Trade Center disaster, New York's Tonic hastily organized a five-day series of benefit performances of the cream of the venue's regular performers. The series raised a modest \$18,000 for the Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund.

On 19 September, John Zorn appeared with two ensembles, the Masada Quartet and Masada String Trio. Surprisingly, there were no speeches, no introductory statements nor explanations, but this was probably a relief to most of the audience, who had been immersed in sound the clock OMN coverage of the disaster and its aftermath for a week, and knew they had come away. (In spite of the steep admission price of \$25 for these benefit shows, people were queuing up outside Tonic an hour before showtime.)

The Masada Quartet (Zorn on alto sax, Dave Douglas on trumpet, Greg Cohen on string bass and Kenny Wollesen on drums) played an incredibly tight set ranging from relaxed modal jams to early Ornette-style free jazz to the kind of crazed klezmer-tinged "ethnic" music that Zorn

always seems to come back to. It's hard to tell just how much of this music is composed and how much improvised; a problem not made any easier by the tremendous rapport among the members of this now very seasoned ensemble. The interplay between the front line of Zorn and Douglas—sometimes playing dueling lines, sometimes improvising in unison—is particularly impressive. Nevertheless, this is about as democratic an outfit as you'll find, with the attention and the solos (of which there were many) distributed absolutely equally. The solos themselves were refreshingly tasteful and inspired, with not a whiff of excess or self-indulgence. As for the group playing, it was wild but controlled, with Zorn tearing off scintillating, upper register squawks and then stepping (with the rest of the ensemble) on a dime. Leading the group through its rapid fire changes, soft-touch drummer Wollesen was somehow both precise and messy. The enthusiastic audience roared in appreciation at the quartet's every move. Considering the delayed following Zorn has at Tonic, that may or may not have been a knee-jerk reaction, but this group definitely deserved it.

Later in the evening, The Masada String Trio (Mark Feldman on violin, Erik Friedlander on cello and Greg Cohen on string bass) showcased Zorn's "classical" work. Arranged in close formation on stage (Zorn, nearly invisible, conducting from the audience pit), the group performed a repertoire that was even wider ranging than the

quartet's, hiring at everything from tango to Bartók, but most of it unrecognizable. While not letting the subsequence and general positive vibe of the quartet's performance dissipate, the trio's set was more often raw and haunting. But the serene, tightly woven pizzicato passages played by Feldman and Friedlander were counterpointed by "high speed chase" moments, showcasing Zorn's well-known affinity for cartoon music. The musicmaking was superb all around, particularly in a solo violin piece in which Feldman performed great gymnastic leaps around the neck.

The final night of the series opened with a quartet consisting of Mark Feldman (violin), Sylvie Courvoisier (piano), Erik Friedlander (cello), Ikuo Mori (electronics) and Susie Ibarra (drums). In contrast to Zorn's performances, which were filled with commotion, hugging and good cheer, the mood of this set was dark and unsettling. Coincidentally or not, this seemed to reflect the other mood prevailing in New York: deep fears about the possibility of further terrorist attacks or a fully fledged war.

The quintet's music—sometimes played as a ensemble, sometimes in twos and threes—was emotional and expressive; it drifted lightly through the air and then came crashing down to earth in a maelstrom of gabbled cymbals and slammed piano chord clusters. Feldman's violin emitted delicate but impassioned high pitched flurries, like a little bird crying. Courvoisier muted her strings with electric tape and then pounded on the keys in vain, producing nothing but a

muffled thud. The sounds were tense, unsettling, threatening, threatened When Ibarra switched to soft snarels and a slower, steeper tempo, the mood became almost mournful. Mori's laptop rained down thin projectiles of metal and shivers of glitchy electronic clarity. It may not have been happy music, but it was beautiful, passionate and inspired. Group improvisation at its very best.

Following the quartet was the duo of Matthew Shipp (piano) and Rob Brown (alto sax and flute). Granted, the previous set was a tough one to follow, but Shipp and Brown didn't seem to be trying their hardest. Their performance was one long improvisation that, though it had its moments, mostly meandered aimlessly and went on for too long. The duo didn't appear to be paying enough attention to each other, and the lack of electricity on stage was felt by the whole audience, who politely applauded at the end of the set but didn't seem particularly engaged or excited.

Scheduled to close the show was a performance by Bill Lowell, who has appeared live very rarely in recent years. At the end of the Shipp/Brown set, however, an announcement was made that "due to unforeseen circumstances," Lowell would not be appearing. Surely they could have made that announcement at the door before people (many of whom had come especially to see Lowell) had paid their \$25, but that's New York for you. And it was all for a very good cause. □

X-TRACT CHICAGO BERLIN PODEWIL GERMANY

BY NAKULI GRAYENHORN

Six years after a concert season featuring Chicago avant jazz stalwarts such as Ken Vandermark and Fred Anderson, Podewil music curator Elie Mithreid decided to revisit the musical borders blowing around the Windy City. But instead of reprinting 1995's AACM 101 event, the two week long X-tract Chicago festival focused on improv, electronics and post-rock.

X-tract Chicago was almost stillborn because of provincial zoning policy. Noise from the unexpected construction of a subterranean garage under the Podewil courtyard jeopardized rehearsals. It was a problem that could be solved, though, and proved a minor hiccup compared to the events of 11 September: the festival's opening night. About one-third of the performers cancelled, including Jim O'Rourke. David Grubbs and Tony Conrad. After some searching, the organizers decided to carry on with a dimmed down line-up.

Before Jim O'Rourke took over her mantle as Chicago's underground catalyst, the Windy City belonged to Steve Albini, whose latest group Shellac opened the festival. Todd Terrie's manicured but precise drumming tested the limits of a standard kit, and if the sweat that rained from his brow onto his hat was any indicator, he tested his own physical limits too. Meanwhile, Albini's glasses didn't get with perspiration, they dripped. Terrie's drumming was the loudest element of the Shellac sound, with Albini's pucked, shaken, rubbed feedback guitar reading

the progression from utmost pressure to total entropy and back again (his agonized vocals, buried in the mix, gave about half of the pieces additional sonic texture and desperation). Bob Weston's sludgy bass formed the bedrock.

The rest of the programme veered away from the hardcore territory explored by Shellac into more amorphous zones, a common thread being the use of electroacoustic and digital sounds in unexpected contexts. The heavily AACM-influenced improvisation of the Chicago Underground Duo, featuring comet-born Mazurk and drummer Chad Taylor, was brought into the new century by Mazurk's laptop soundscapes. Complying with an unofficial festival motto, the Duo faced off with Swedish saxophonist Mats Gustafsson and Dutch vocal acrobat Jaak Jäsk, pitting different geographic origins and musical approaches against each other to watch sparks fly. Unfortunately, the subdued Duo and over the top Gustafsson/Berk pairing started getting only when the jam session was nearly over. Unlike the Berk/Gustafsson turn that preceded the Duo, where Berk's Didakt vocal gymnastics, roared from the burlen of words and meaning, meshed well with Gustafsson's tongue flustering technique, which sounds as if he massed the music down in which the saxophone was categorised as a brass, not percussion instrument.

Electronics kept a low but steady profile in the prime melancholy of California. With a voice oddly reminiscent at times of both Michael Stipe and Kurt Cobain, singer Tim Rübik intoned songs like "Don't Let Me Be Nervous" and "Muffins," while the set was equally divided between short,

tunes and longer instrumentalists. The use of old-fashioned instruments such as a Rickman-backed guitar, kazo, melodica and bean shaker belied the looser, less traditional structure. Post-rockers Town And Country also played the familiar with the unknown, performing their ethereal, minimal pieces on contrabasses, acoustic guitar, piano, harmonium, brass and analogue synthesizer. Also featured were Suzuki hand chimes and metal valves of varying length with mallets attached, which emitted a sound when shaken. The only burn note of the festival was the Chicago/Vienna Improv ensemble PostNeg, whose journey into sound, unlike that of the other performers, was unwitting. The Improv duo following PostNeg, Rectangles's Noll Acholoff and Quentin Rallet, played to an almost empty hall, but the audience who did remain were enthusiastic about their challenging, visceral set.

Electronics in a purer form also figured prominently in the festival. TV Pow offered a performer-less laptop music-concrete drama, its samples of plaintive human voices and seaplane jets and the menacing metallic din unavoidably echoed the World Trade Center attack. Berlin electronic duo Denzel & Mühle played a percolating, rhythm-heavy synth and sample set. Chicago born, Berlin based singer Sarah War, Raster-Notion act Kyborg and local electronics hopefuls Tournaschew were accompanied by video artist and Toronto associate Casey Rice, who from Chicago via streaming video, filling on the colour saturated equestrian and urban images of Anna Wagner's installation Chicago Horse, which was set up in the Podewil lobby.

Mori's second performance, with Ribben Effect and her sometime collaborators Tawler, was marred by an uncooperative microphone. A pity, as Mori's evocative Gothic voice and incorporation of a diaphanous field prelude. Otherwise, Ribben Effect, alumni of X-tract Chicago closer Joy Mallozzi's Experimental Sound Studio, performed an intriguing combination of twangy guitar, accordion, electroacoustics and digital sounds. Where fellow Chicagoans Callione evoked transit and transience in their music, Ribben Effect expressed a profound wanderlust.

X-tract Chicago's various side events sought to make connections to other Chicago musical traditions and even non-musical creative impulses. Common Form performed a Chicago House DJ set at the GDR-chi Steinradlo club. Alternative parties saw guitarist Rino Engel and his Gorra Gang—Chicago 2018 compiler Wolf Kamsman's spinning records by Curtis Mayfield, Elmore James, The Pharoos, Torrance and The Art Ensemble of Chicago. The Goat Island theatre troupe performed *It's An Earthquake In My Heart*, an experimental piece using dramatic elements as minimalist composites use musical patterns. Throughout the festival, video and sound installations by Sky Lee, Art Jones, James Holt, Alex Meyer, TV Pow's Brent Gubert and Petra Neuenhofer were on display. Unfortunately, the installations were hidden away on the Podewil's first floor, perhaps a special screening would have done the intriguing works (especially Digital Hardcore collaborator Jones's wacky video music video deconstructions) more justice. □



Chicago Underground Duo's Rob Mazurek and Chad Taylor in Battle (top); Mats Gustafsson, Leif Elggren and Kevin Drumm in Gothenburg (below)

DEG GOTHENBURG ART SOUNDS SWEDEN

BY MAGNUS HAGLUND

There were plenty of spectacular events during the Gothenburg Art Sounds festival in October. There was a vast light and video installation by Viennese duo Granular Synthesis; London-based experimental group Apartment House playing early glitchic scores by Cornelius Corleow and Sylvain Bussetti; Carsten Nicolai and Ryoji Ikeda performing their *Cycle* material; and Gothenburg techno duo 81mm2 performing in the slightly surreal surroundings of the green-grocery department of the Domus foodstore. But the most unpredictable and astonishing feature of the

programme had to be the collective improvisation of the DEG trio, consisting of freeform investigator and saxophonist Mats Gustafsson, laboratory engineer and static noise master Leif Elggren and voodoo glitch guitarist Kevin Drumm.

The performance begins and ends with recorded voices, sending out more or less unrecognisable messages. Politicians, priests, poets? After a while they are joined by different scraping and rambling sounds. Gustafsson is seated, fingering the keys of his extremely amplified saxophone, then drawing a bow over the end of the bell-piece, but he never blows any regular tones. The result is a series of intruding sounds, diversions from the musical norms, remnants and relics.

An uneasy, threatening feeling soon takes over, a sense of being looked inside a

catastrophic scenario, a city turned into a nightmare or a war zone. Political sound art? Aesthetic terrorism? Everybody who was at Gothenburg during the EU summit in the middle of June will remember this one particular sound circling police helicopters. Here it comes again, with the feeling of a physical attack, combined with the sounds of roaring aircraft engines and atrocious machine effects. Memories of the riots were awakened: the assaults on protesters by the police, the welfare system falling apart, but also, inevitably, the collapse of the World Trade Center and the subsequent bombing raids over Afghanistan.

The strength of the performance lies in its high level of concentration, from beginning to end, and the complete absence of any gestural markings.

No theatre, no drama. The nucleus of the wider and wider circles of energy is a strange immobility and stillness. In the light of what these musicians have been involved in before, the expression is remarkably quiet. Nevertheless, the counterpart of this seeming non-activity and abandonment of expressionist rhetoric was an overwhelmingly physical presence and intensity. It's the complete opposite of Peter Brötzmann's 30-year-old *Machine Gun*, but surprisingly close to its anti-war message and its erasure of individual expression. The ambiguous ecstasy of using heavy weaponry. Maybe this is the protest music of today, set doing very much, just trying to let sounds and the world remain as they are. The ruptures and incongruities are there for everyone to see and hear. □

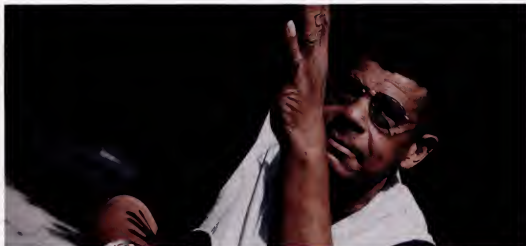
Out There

This month's selected festivals, live events, clubs and broadcasts.

Send info to *The Wire*, 2nd Floor East, 88-94 Wentworth Street, London E1 7SA, UK

Fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011, listings@thewire.co.uk

Deadline for December: Friday 9 November



Sunny Murray

UK Festivals

ATLANTIC WAVES

LONDON

Showcase of Portuguese new music, some of it featured on the Exploratory Music From Portugal CD that came with subscriber copies of *The Wire* 212. Highlights include Telectu with Eddie Pheasant & Tom Chant and David Mearns & Chris Outier (9 November), Mino Jolo & Mino Laginha and Carlos Barreto (10), Carlos Zingre, Emidio Badurho, Murt World & Mick Beck and Nuno Rebelo, Minto Francis, Kato Hede & John Bisset (13), Rodrigo Leão and Luis Pena (18), and an end of festival club night (29). Various venues, times and prices, 020 7968 7622, www.atlanticwaves.org.uk

THE CUTTING EDGE

LONDON

The contemporary composition series continues with The Composers Ensemble (1 November), The Delta Saxophone Quartet play Westbrook, Andressen and Filbin (8), CHROMA (15), The Fikun Group play Andrew Poppy, Morton Feldman and Filbin (22); and electroacoustic works by Hildegard Westerkamp, Javier Alvarez, Evelyn Ficzara, Katherine Norman, Jonathan Harvey and Hansjak Birtwistle (29) at 8pm and 7:30pm. Warehouse, Thursdays, 7:30pm, £8/£5, 020 7489 8667, www.bmic.co.uk

FIFTH PLANET TREE MUSIC FESTIVAL

LONDON

Terry Riley once again heads up this series of four concerts, each of which starts with a short discussion on an issue relating to ecology,

cosmology and globalisation. Terry Riley and son Glyn Riley (2 November), Robert Rich's Music For Synagogic States (3), pianist Tania Chen plays music by Lou Harrison and Alan Hovhaness (9) and Planet Tree organiser Lawrence Bell and friends celebrate his 50th birthday (10). Conway Hall & October Gallery, 2-10 November, times/prices vary, 020 8444 4073, www.planettree.org

FUTURESONIC-001-

MANCHESTER

Six packed days of music and new media dubbed "Sonar In The Rain" by the organisers. Highlights include CCTV-wired commissions from Harrop, Kaffa, Matthews, Britney Operated and Gascorn (16 November), dysfunctional beats with Luke Vibert, Redbus Accent and Iconus (16), Women in Electronics discussion chaired by *The Wire*'s Anne Hilde Nesert (16), Matt Black, Oat Rhine and political comic Mark Thomas present newly commissioned audiovisual screenings and performances from Ultra-Red and Coldcut (17), Crass, Mark Thomas and others discuss how art can confront surveillance and political control (17), performances by Philip Jeck, Comae and People Like Us (17), Instant and Lost Weight live plus DJs (17) Bent, Ladytron and Ultra-Red (17), Skam Records 10th Birthday with Alder & Elus, Solis, Teem Ogotski, Meam and a 4Hem Of set (17), Big Chill brunch with Pato Lawrence (18) and Bleep & Fire soundtrack (18). Various venues, 13-18 November, times/prices vary, 0161 953 4100, www.futuresonic.com

HUDDERSFIELD CONTEMPORARY

MUSIC FESTIVAL

HUDDERSFIELD

The highlight of this year's festival is a Cornelius Cardew tribute concert (28 November) with performers including Apartment House, John Tibury, Michael Parsons, Howard Skempton and Jayne Parker. There is also a performance of Paragraph Six from Cardew's *The Great Learning* (28) preceded by a rehearsal open to all comers at 10am and a post-performance debate about Cardew's importance. Other composers whose works are featured include Ianus Xenakis, James Oliver, György Kurtág, György Ligeti, Conlon Nanamirow, Henric Giesbrecht and Kaya Sawahito. Various venues, times/prices vary, 22 November-2 December, www.lcnf.co.uk

LONDON JAZZ FESTIVAL

LONDON

Owner jazz and World Music dominate this year's event, with Michael Brecker, Wayne Shorter, Us3, Claude Despe, Buddy Gay, Macao Parker, Rachid Taha, Ibrahim Ferrer, Jaci Jarama All Stars, Tenory Smith, Courtney Pine, Byron Morris & Unity, Salsko Fuji, Mats Gustafsson Trio, Beanoat Marcello, Angelle Kodo and more. Various venues, 9-18 November, times, prices vary, www.londonjazz.org.uk

OCNRE 7

GLOUCESTER

Ten hours of music in one day featuring Echo & The Bunnymen guitarist Will Sergeant, Portofino's Adrian Uhlly, Skyny, Glasgow's Mount Vernon Arts Lab, Applecraft, plus local

acts and special guests still to be announced. Gloucester Guildhall, 17 November, £20 includes CD programme, 1-3:30pm, www.ocnre.co.uk

PIANO SOLOS

GLASGOW

A series of concerts featuring contemporary piano works played by leading performers. AMM pianist John Tibury plays Morton Feldman's *Tragic Memories* (16 November) and For Bunta Marcus (17) while Marc Coussaou performs a 90 minute work which also incorporates CD, lighting and video (21 & 22). Herbert Henck plays John Cage's *Music Of Changes* (2 & 3 December), and Ian Pace plays Michael Finnissy's *Five* and a half hour work *The History of Photography In Sound* (6). CCA, 16 November-8 December, 8pm, £8/£6, 0141 332 7521, www.cca-glasgow.com

TERMITE CLUB FESTIVAL 2001

LEEDS

Fire music, inspired weirdness, dark ambience, noise improv and more at this forward-looking Out There annual. Sunny Murray/Paul Hession/Alan Wilkinson, Ashbury Rawgitations and Crumbling Spine (30 November at The Adelphi), and Volcano The Bear, Minix, Nectare, Backdrum/Mower and Midwich (1 December at East Street Studios). Various venues, pass for both nights £10/£5, 01943 468615, www.gscobes.com/termite_dub

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO WITH IT?

LONDON

Digital arts festival which includes scene music events of interest. San Francisco electroacoustic

Atlantic Waves²⁰⁰¹

exploratory music from Portugal

Atlantic Waves 2001 is the first major festival dedicated to bringing contemporary Portuguese music to a British audience. It takes place in London throughout November 2001 and includes a total of eight dates, covering a wide range of musical styles. Most concerts will also feature guest appearances by British musicians.



Fri 2 Nov 7.30pm

Ocean 2 £9 adv
African music in association with Cactus Jazz
Palop Africa
featuring
Paulo Flores
Manecas Costa
Vaiss
Astra Harris

Fri 6 Nov 7.30pm

Ocean 2 £10 adv
Improvised and experimental music in association with London Jazz Festival
Telectu (Jorge Lima Barreto and Vitor Rua)
Eddie Prévost
Tom Chant
David Maranhã
Chris Cutler

Sat 10 Nov 7.30pm

Purcell Room £15 adv
Jazz music in association with London Jazz Festival
Maria João
Mário Laginha
Toninho Ferragutti
Helge Norbakken
Carlos Barretto
Mário Delgado
José Salgueiro

Sun 11 Nov 7.30pm

Ocean 2 £10 adv
Improved and experimental music in association with London Jazz Festival
Carlos Zingaro
Emídio Buchinho
Matt Wand
Mick Beck
Nuno Rebelo
Marco Franco
Kato Hideki
John Bisset

Fri 16 Nov 7.45pm

Queen Elizabeth Hall £20 / £17.50
Fado music in association with London Jazz Festival
Misia

Sun 18 Nov 7.30pm

Ocean £15 adv
Acoustic pop meets modern classical music
Rodrigo Leão
Lula Pena

Mon 19 Nov 7.30pm

Ocean £15 adv
Classical and contemporary music
Chilingirian Quartet with **Pedro Carneiro**
The Wallace Collection

Tue 20 Nov 8.00pm

93 Feet East £5 bef, 11pm, £7 aft, 11pm
Club night
DJ Rui Vargas (Lux)
DJ Tó Ricciardi
(Nylon Discographics)
+ UK guests

Queen Elizabeth Hall

South East Centre
London SE1
Box office: 020 7513 4342

Purcell Room

South East Centre
London SE1
Box office: 020 7513 4342

Ocean

South East Centre
London SE1
Box office: 020 7513 4342

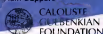
93 Feet East

93 Feet East
200 Brick Lane, London EC2A 3EJ
Box office: 020 7513 4342

Every ticket holder is entitled to an exclusive free CD.

For further details contact: 020 7908 7622
e-mail: info@atlanticwaves.org.uk
www.atlanticwaves.org.uk

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Other Support





Cannibal Ox

polihex Ultra-Red give a rare performance (8 November). Steve Barker and The Blood And Fire Sound System featuring MC Rankin' Joe appear in a head to head with digital laptops. Random Factor (16) and Kid606 returns to close the festival with People Like Us (24). London ICA, 8-24 November, Brix, 020 7930 3647, www.whatyouwantsdowithit.com

WHERE OPPOSITES ATTRACT?

LONDON
Hoping to be the first of an annual festival where the audience chooses improvising groupings from a pool of performers. The inaugural event includes Caroline Keabed, Richard Thomas, The Bohman Brothers, reSponse, Paul Hood, London Boy Orchestra, Hugh Metcalfe, Yumi Hara, Via Corneghem, Steve Beresford and many more. Shepherds Bush Village Hall, 3 November, 12noon-7pm, £3.50/£2.50

International Festivals

AVANTO FINLAND

Helsinki's Media Art Festival this year has a Japanese slant with performers including Otomo Yoshihide, Ritsko, Sachiko M, Tachibana Nakamura and Yamamoto, as well as Farnes Maruul, ZEA, the use, Ogi Bastards, Kan Aronpura, The Wire Sound System and others. A full accompanying film programme includes work by Tony Conrad, Craig Baldwin, Malcolm Le Grice and Jack Smith. Helsinki various venues, 6-11 November, www.avantofestival.com

DENSITIES FESTIVAL FRANCE

Fifth edition of this excellent improvised music festival peeped by sound poetry and dances and fitted out by visual artists. Features John Oswald, Paul Lovens, Vase Crack, John Butcher, Martin Tétreault, Rhodan Davies, Jérôme Noetinger, John Russell, Michel Doneda, Xavier Charles, Sophie Agnet, Daniel Marchetti, Ningseng, Gertraud Müller and others. Fresnes-en-

Woivre near Verdun, 1-4 November, www.vudu.net/assaf/

FESTIVAL ECOUTER VOIR FRANCE

Impressively imaginative bill for the first edition of this music and visual art festival. Chanson with a surreal twist from Brigitte Fontaine (10 November), singer Red performs with the film Downtown 81 about pianist Jean-Michel Bosquet (11), Belgian trio Slang (12), improvising big band La Grand Déformation plus bassist Claude Tchamitchian (13), Hoboken Saxophone Quartet plus Louis Sclaves (14), musical recycling from Ruben Steiner (15), Japan's Of Kush plus an 'action painter' (16), Yavon movies from The Sankho Nemtchylak Quartet. There's also a full programme of visual art by 12 artists including performances and installations. Lyon various venues, times/prices vary, 00 33 4 7200 8659, www.festival-ecouter-voir.com

FESTIVAL DE L'EAU

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC
Third edition of the African festival features Keith Rowe and Jérôme Noetinger cementing Franco-Alban relations with local musicians Camiel Zehri, Camiel Masad, Orchestre De Trompes Des Bards, Pyrrhis Et L'axe Musical. Bangui, 24 November-2 December, 00 33 2 40 36 32 69 (English speakers), 00 33 1 47 57 24 12 (French speakers)

IMAGES SONORES BELGIUM

The third edition of the annual Ulgè festival this year focuses on piano and live electronics. Featuring Kathrine Stockhausen and Maurizio Kagel alongside electronic improvisation by Andrea Neumann and Annette Krebs and Keith Rowe & Cor Fuhler, plus Belgian composers and performers: Ulgè Ancienne Eglise St-Anré, 16-18 November, 00 32 4 223 22 86

LEM SPAIN

The Fifth International Experimental Music Festival continues this month. Highlights include

Rova Saxophone Quartet (8 November), Lié Quan Ninh Sedet (9), The Remedy featuring Axel Dörner (10) and Derek Bailey & Hisako Horioka (11) Barcelona various venues, times/prices vary, 00 34 932 238 4038, www.graciotextor.com

MUSIC UNLIMITED XV AUSTRIA

Ass-kicking, oblique Dutch anarcho-rockers The Ex curate this three day festival which features Banda Tevca, Mary Oliver, Terrie Ex & Hen Bennick and Kleeta Red (9 November); director Spike Jones on video, Katherine Ex & Ivra Bidona, Happy Witz, Melt Bernini, Ethiopian Asema Group and The Ex (10); 4Miks, Xu, Shilac and Farfear Saville (11); Wels Schladkopf, 9-11 November, 07242 56375, www.servus.at/wb

TAMPERE JAZZ HAPPENING FINLAND

Highlights of one of the most prestigious events in the Finnish jazz calendar include New York free drummer Malcom Graves, Australia's The Necks, Barry Guy New Grooves, Rova Saxophone Quartet, Anne Gosfield Trio, John Lindberg Ensemble featuring Wadada Leo Smith, Larry Ochs & Andrew Cyrille, Marilyn Crispell, Mats Gustafsson, Barry Guy & Raymond Srid and The Eskies featuring Jon Ravi. Tampere various venues, times/prices vary, 2-4 November, 00 35 8 323 0121, www.tampere.fi/jazz

TOTAL MUSIC MEETING 91 GERMANY

Europe's premier long-running free improvisation event. George Lewis's Voyager, Ist, Zentralquartett, Sven-Ake Johansson, Ole Ertelshausch, Alberto Berardo & Giancarlo Lucatelli, Maela, August Fernández, Armand Angster & Françoise Kubler and Contrabassdarinet Project, Beñin Podewil, 1-3 November, 00 49 30 247 49 777

TRANSMUSICALES FRANCE

Techno Animal, Cannibal Ox, Aesop Rock and many others. A side project of the festival at Rennes University called "Electronik" showcases the French electronic scene and

features Tal, Cross-Cross, Out Politics, Quise Gaz, Playdoh, Marie Douber, Mls, VuFourVus (30 November). Rennes various venues, 28 November-1 December, times/prices vary, www.britainnet.com/rou.../automne2001/Fans23.htm

Special Events

CRASS AUCTION UK

New dates for this auction to raise money for the Crass commune, Oxl House. Rare material by Crass, Tortoise, Joe Oliverth, David Tibet and many other artists from all manner of disciplines will be going under the hammer London Home Hospital, the exhibition of works runs from 19-25 November with an opening party on the 19, and the online auction runs from 21 November-1 December via eBay, www.southern.com/southern/labels/CRC

HAT UK

A performance involving words, music and, at knitting courtesy of Ian McMillan and (who else?) Billy Jenkins. Halifax Woodcut Theatre (21 November), Newcastle Live Theatre (22), York St Jack Lyons Concert Hall (23) www.hat.co.uk

INTERVALS IN LIGHT

The premiere of Jon Lloyd's String Quartet, plus Lloyd and Rob Palmer improvising to film, and a multi-art project from vocalist Orange and composer Daniel Bilo. London Battersea Arts Centre, 10 November, 8-30pm, £8/£5, 020 7223 2223

THE ORIGIN OF PAINTING UK

This exhibition by Disinformation includes the sounds of lightning strikes and the pulsing sub base of electricity pylons alongside interactive light installations and video work. There are also talks and discussions and an associated film season including Craig Baldwin's Specters Of The Spectrum and films about Nikola Tesla.



Anti-Pop Consortium

Semiconductor are artists in residence. Brighton Fabrics and Cinematheque Media Centre, 10 November-16 December, 01273 779546

OUT OF BOUNDS UK

A benefit event for Médecins Sans Frontières in support of their longstanding humanitarian work in Afghanistan and worldwide. Leftfield poetry, music, and performance from Peter Blegvad, Ois Cheek, Bob Cobbing, Maggie Nicols, Susanna Ferau, Richard Sanderson and more. London St Paul's Church, 8 November, 7:30pm, outofboundsgifts.net

SARAH PEEBLES/DAVID TOOP/ GREG CLOW

CANADA Collaboration between Wire contributor Toop, composer Peebles and Ambient DJ Clow. Toronto St George the Martyr Church, 21 November, Bpm, 001 416 204 1080, www.musicgallery.org

SUMMER

IRELAND Concerts, readings and installations curated by the Whispersing Gallery. Simon O'Connor and Simon Doyle's *Home & Garden* (15 November), electronic play by Silek Kwi and Judith Ring (18), minimal electronics from Osmaacha Costello & David Donohoe (17), readings of texts by Schwitters, Stein and Cage (23), and Fergus Kelly's *Repetitive Strain Injuries* (24). Dublin Project Arts Centre, www.whispersinggallery.com

TILBURY PERFORMS BECKETT

UK The AMM pianist performs *Knaps Last Tape* and *Cascando Good Wood Theatres*. Goldsmiths College, 8-9 November, 7:30pm, 01304 379879

WARP PARTY

UK Anti-Pop Consortium and Plaid live plus DJ r0y4ltyandd-jms-cash/carry. Uxla, Mark Bell, Mica Collins and Warp DJs. London Ocean, 9 November, 9pm, £15, 020 8533 0111

On Stage

AMM

A rare date for the venerable noise improvists. London Warehouse, 31 October, 7:30pm

DYSFUNCTIONAL LIVEARTS

A collection of non-linear individuality through music, multimedia and design, curated by Kingsuk Sowas (aka Bedouin Ascent). Featured artists include Luke Vibert, DJ Spooky, Bedouin Ascent, Isaac, Solar-X, Kaffe Matthews, Neotropics & Gascon, Apache 61, People Like Us and Allero Artists vary from venue to venue. Manchester Green Room (16 November), Nottingham Heavenly Social (25), London 93 Feet East (6 December), Bristol Thekla (13), www.dysfunctional.net

BONNIE PRINCE BILLY

Will Osham and friends. London Shepherds Bush Empire (3 November), Manchester University (4), Glasgow The Arches (5)

THE FALL

The four concludes UK. London Forum (10 November), Manchester Planet K (29)

FRETWORK

Viol ensemble with counterpointers and dancers perform works by Michael Nyman, Tan Dun, John Tavener and others, alongside early music works by 16th and 17th century composers on this Contemporary Music Network tour sponsored by The Wire. Hastings St Mary in the Castle (2 November), Lancaster University (3), Bristol Cathedral (4), Cheltenham St Matthew's Church (5), London Union Chapel (6), Birmingham St Alban's Highgate (7), Sheffield Cathedral (8), Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral (10), www.ccmn.org.uk

DIAMANDA GALS

A new set of standards and originals from New York's dark duo. Glasgow CCA, 12 and 14 November, 0141 332 7521, www.cca-glasgow.com

RICHARD GALLIANO

Accordist combining folk and jazz influences in duo with clarinetist Michel Portal, and with The New York Quintet featuring ace vocalist Mark Feldman. Another Contemporary Music Network tour sponsored by The Wire. London Queen Elizabeth Hall (18 November), Brighton Dome (19), Oxford St Barnabas Church (20), Huddersfield Lawrence Batley Theatre (22), Birmingham CBSO Centre (23) and Kendal Brewery (24), www.ccmn.org.uk

JOHN GREAVES + LEE GRIFFITHS

Ex-Henry Cow bassist brings his new group to Club Gazebo. London The Spitz, 1 November, 8pm, £15/£12, 020 7392 9032, www.thespitz.co.uk

HERBIE HANCOCK

Promoting his new *Future 2 Future* album. London Forum (21 November), Birmingham Academy (22), Manchester Apollo (23)

DI JAZZY JEFF

Three opportunities for capitalists to catch Philadelphia's Hip-hop here (minus The Fresh Prince). Support from Darius, Vektor Dystan, Omnitri From Paris, Phil Achau and others at The End & Aka Bar, 10 November, 10pm-5am, £12/£5. Jeff on the decks and with a live band from Philadelphia play Viktor Duplak at Cargo, 12 November Bpm-1am, £5/£8. Jeff and BBE at Nottingham Hills Arts Club, 15 November, Bpm-2am, £5

LOJO + TINARIWEN

Celli Olan presents this double-header featuring Malian fusionists and the politicized Touareg troupe. London Queen Elizabeth Hall, 14 November, 7:45pm, £15/£12 £5, 020 7960 4242

POETS OF RHYTHM

Quannum project live group. Glasgow The Arches (16 November), London Jazz Cafe (19-20), Gateway Cabs (21), Dub In Pot (22), Manchester Band On The Wall (23), Leeds The Warehouse

(24), London Deep Funk Festival at the Forum with Breakstea, The New Mastersounds and DJ Keb Gange (2 December)

EDDIE PREVOST WORKSHOP GROUPINGS

AMM drummer and flautist including John Edwards and Paul Rutherford and many improving newcomers. London Vortex, 7 November, £5, 020 7254 0516

KAIJA SAARIHO'S FROM THE GRAMMAR OF DREAMS

New music theatre from the Paris based Finnish composer mixing live performers, two saxophones and electronics on a Contemporary Music Network tour sponsored by The Wire. London Queen Elizabeth Hall (18 November), Basingsstoke The Asini (20), Kendal Brewery (22), Huddersfield Lawrence Batley Theatre (24), Newcastle Playhouse (26), www.ccmn.org.uk

IRMIN SCHMIDT & KUMO

Can founder member with sound engineer and drum programmer. London Queen Elizabeth Hall, 12 November, 020 7960 4242, www.ih.org.uk

SFQ + MARTIN TETREAULT + UCHIHASHI KAZUHISA

First concert in the LMN's Winter Session features Quebecois turntablist Tetreault, Alfred States guitarist Kazuhisa and Simon H Fell's compositions for improvising quartet. London The Warehouse, 4 November, 7:30pm, £7/£5. In addition, SFQ also play Newcastle Bridge Hotel (3), Leeds The Warehouse (7), Colchester Arts Centre (8), Cambridge Mumford Theatre (9), Norwich John Innes Centre (12), www.ouracesingers.com

JAH SHAKA SOUND

Roots 'n' culture sound system. London The Rocket, 19 November, 10pm-6am, £12/£10

DI SPOOKY

Plaid DJ Miki tours his eclectic live mixes. Brighton Pressure Point (14 November), London 93 Feet East (15 with Luke Vibert), Leeds

first british tour,
november 2001

tin.hat trio



Somewhere between bluegrass, Parisian café music, Gypsy jazz, Argentinian tango and Delta blues lurks the musical soul of the Tin Hat Trio. If Astor Piazzolla had written a soundtrack for a Hitchcock movie or if an Albanian folk trio had listened to Robert Johnson, Thelonius Monk and Stravinsky, they might have come up with music that sounds like Tin Hat Trio. Their new CD *Helium*, which features John Waits, is adventurous, accessible, sexy, creepy, comic, haunting and enough to make the saddest of souls smile.

Sunday 11 November 8pm
BRIGHTON, Pavilion Theatre
01273 709 709

Monday 12 November 7.30pm
LONDON, Purcell Room
020 7960 4242
(Part of the London Jazz Festival)


Tuesday 13 November 8pm
NEWCASTLE, The Cluny
0191 230 4474

Wednesday 14 November 8.30pm
LEEDS, The Wardrobe
0113 274 2486

Thursday 15 November 8pm
KENDAL, Brewery Arts Centre
01539 725 133

BBC RADIO 3 LONDON JAZZ FESTIVAL

9th to 18th November
BOOKINGS 020 7960 4242
www.rfh.org.uk



WAYNE SHORTER

With Brian Blade
John Patitucci
Danilo Perez
+ Bojan Z

Saxophonist of choice for the Jazz Messengers, Miles and Weather Report returns to his acoustic roots with a seriously heavyweight rhythm section.

Sat 10 Nov. ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL



IRMIN SCHMIDT & KUMO

'MASTERS OF CONFUSION'
+ Mark Springer

Schmidt, from the legendary Can, meets programmer Kumo to create a cascade of beats that touch on raging rock and incantatory trance loops. *Masters of Confusion*, the CD, is available on Mute.

Mon 12 Nov. QUEEN ELIZABETH HALL



MIKE GIBBS & COLIN TOWNS

+ NDR Big Band

Double bill of two of jazz's most original composers.

Sat 10 Nov.
QUEEN ELIZABETH HALL



TOMMY SMITH

Special solo performance from sax maestro with an arsenal of electronics.

Wed 14 Nov.
PURCELL ROOM



ESBJORN SVENSSON TRIO

+ Matthew Bourne

The re-conception of the jazz piano trio - music on a whole other level.

Sun 11 Nov. QUEEN ELIZABETH HALL



SATOKO FUJII

+ Mats Gustafsson Trio

Pianist Fujii joins trumpeter Tamura to create sounds with a potent mix of passion and calculated madness - improvisation that's accessible and reflective.

Thu 15 Nov. PURCELL ROOM



INTERGALACTIC CONTEMPORARY ENSEMBLE (I.C.E.)

To the music establishment what the Pistols were to Yes. Big band crime jazz from Quincy Jones, Jay Hawkins and Leonard Bernstein.

Sun 11 Nov. PURCELL ROOM



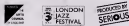
MOMENTUM MOBILE

Saxophonist Michael Riessler bridges the gap between jazz and new music with his brass group, trombone maestro Annie Whitehead and string quartet, Solid Strings.

Sat 17 Nov. PURCELL ROOM

+ other artists include US3, Jazz Jamaica All Stars, Joshua Redman, Courtney Pine, Robert Mitchell, Diana Krall, Fred Hersch, Trilok Gurtu, Angelique Kidjo, Marie Joao, Branford Marsalis

FOR DETAILS ON ALL SHOWS SEE WWW.SERIOUS.ORG.UK
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www.serious.org.uk



Out There

Warehouse (16), Bristol Thekla (17), London Embassy Bar (18)

DAVID THOMAS & TWO PALE BOYS + PINKIE MACLURE GROUP

Expanded songs from ex-Pink Uke frontman plus impressive Scots songstress. London The Spitz, 29 November, D02 7352 9032, www.thespitz.co.uk

TIN HAT TRIO

Genre-blending acoustic trio. Brighton Pavilion Theatre (11 November), London Purcell Room (12), Newcastle The Cluny (13), Leeds The Warehouse (14), Kendal Brewery Arts Centre (15)

ANOF WEATHERALL

The Lone Swindonian on tour. London 93 Feet East (2 November), Birmingham Procession, Birmingham (3), Glasgow Gain (9), Aberdeen Veal (24)

Club Spaces

BAGGAGE RECLAIM

Diverse approaches to song and more at the leftfield interdisciplinary (No Grant & Richard Gallon), Kelsey Michael & Dean Brodhead, Jo Thomas, Ross Parlane & Rohan Thomas and Richard Sanderson. London 12 Bar, 25 November. Bpm, 56

CERTIFICATE 18

Pilots, Paul Ameli, Pinoptica and Di TeeBee. London 93 Feet East, 10 December. D02 7613 7330, www.cargo-london.com

CUBE REBULO PARTY

Benefit to raise money for the fire-damaged Cube Cinema featuring Ninja Tune audiovisual artists Heronika, The 2 Amps, Ubonad & Motokyo, Rezonics, Confident Bob and Loving Brains Thekla, 15 November. Bm-1am, 56, 0117 907 4190, www.cubecinema.com

CHOCOT

Bohnen Brothers' name-changing improv husk.

Hemennade computer games by Simon Lucas, videos by Brown Sierra, Leslie B. Darnon Abbott, Rob First and others and musical accompaniment by the Bohman Brothers. Expanded Family Band featuring Richard Thomas (9 November), Pat Thomas & Viv Cornhillers, Sue Ferris, Clive Bell, Mark Ve. Mims, Jim Dvornik, Stan Adler & Dennis Austin (12), John Russell & Stefan Keune, Eder Adra & CDAT (19), Steve Noble, Adam Bohman, John Edwards & Jonathan Bohman and The Invisible String Quartet (26). London Boringnigan Cafe, Mondays, Bpm, 54/53, 01932 571 323

FREE RACIALS

Improvisation from John Butcher, Phil Wachsmann, Matt Hutchinson & Tony Wren and The Bohman Brothers. London Red Rose, 7 November. 8-15 pm, 55

INSTANT MUSIC MEETING

Electronic and improvised sound series. Toric Tarr, Richard Sanderson & Peter Quirk (16 November), Graham Hallwell & Simon Vincent, Dylan Bates Quartet (23), musicgroupsmusic collective night featuring ten musicians from ten different countries. London Centurian, 8.30-11pm, 54/53. There's also a special show at London Hat On Wall, featuring Dubotives/Steem/Gaena/Hood, Si-(est)-db and guests, 17 November. Bpm, 55/54

KEEP IT UNREAL

Mr Scruffs last appearance this year plus NYC's Qool Di Mar. London 93 Feet East, 9 November. Bpm-2am, 10/58, D02 7771 2000

KLINKER

Improv and leftfield weekly. Eyal Maoz & Asaf Sines, Alan Wilkerson & Dave Dwyer (1 November), Neville Hawkins, Geometric Spiral, Mark & Nat Gooling, Tony Bianco, Paul Dunnall & Friends (8), Gool Benford & Alan Doggett, Metallica's Vocalist Megadeth (15), Stefan Keune & John Russell (22), Shock Exchange Two with Caroline Knabbe, John Edwards, Richard

Harrison and Bredjak (29), Don Knight's Telle with Dave Sierra, Clive Bell and David Fitzgerald and Spaghettis West One (30). London The Saxon, D02 6806 8216, www.thinkinkersheaven.co.uk

KOSMISCHE

Soundscapes and broken beats from Zan Lyons plus special guests and Knausrock-friendly DJs. London Upstairs at the Garage, 25 November. 9pm-3am, 55

LAPTOP JAM

Bring your laptop or video footage for sound and visual improvisation. Live event webcast on www.havelina.com. Brighton Hanbury Arms, 6 November. 83/52, www.laptop-jams.com

ORCHESTRAL WORLD GROOVE

Swedish electro-dub from The Mugny Quark plus DJs. London Cango, 3 November. Bpm-1am, 55/58, D02 7613 7331, www.cango-london.com

SABBATH

Carpet K plus DJs (4 November), Alder & Elus plus DJs (18). Brighton Decent Rooms, 7.30pm-1am, 54/50/53/50

SAUSAGE MACHINE

Post-rock mainstay Domino signs Hood, plus cut-ups from Cassetteboy, music from Wauerland and DJs. London Arts Cafe, 24 November. Bpm-12am, 55

SCRATCH

Ligly Duckling, Ritchie Ruffhorn, DJs MCs and visuals. London Seals, 1 November. 9pm-3am, 58/56

SPARK

A one-off night of Spanish-based electronica from the Barcelona based artist Fim, Brille and Doree live plus DJs. London Global Cafe, 29 November. 7.30pm-midnight, 54/53, 0208 568 3145, www.sparkleevents.com

THE SPRAWL

Minimal dance features from Sweden's Mikael Stenqvist, Joel Stam from Austria plus regular DJs and visuals. London Global Cafe, 15

November. 7.30pm-midnight, 54/53, 0208 568 3145, www.globalcafe.net

STRUCTURE

Dark drum 'n' bass, HipHop and low end breaks. Pinoptica and Plaid live plus TeeBee, Kute, Paul Ameli, Comptroller Project, Muter User and others. London 93 Feet East, 10 December. Bpm-2am, 51D/53

TRAVELLER

A Gay Called Gerald (3 November), Alex Gopher (10), Rainer Traby (17), Ross Allen and Landslide (24). Newcastle-Upon-Tyne Scotland Yard, Saturdays, 10pm-3am, 57/58, 07768 817 108

10 YEARS OF SKAM

Electronica pioneers celebrate with label artists Bels, Alder & Elus and Quinone Yellow live plus Gescom. London 93 Feet East, 25 November. 7.30pm-late, 58

Incoming

LEAF PARTY

UK Pre-Christmas party featuring percussion group Eardrum plus Mantelba, Gersbach and DJ sets from Graham Surton, Tony Money and Rob Ellis. Visuals by The Wire's design duo Ekimofors. London Cango, 10 December. Bpm-1am, 59/57 includes free CD. D02 7613 7330, pobisverything.com/leafparty

Out There items for inclusion in the December issue should reach us by Friday 7 November

For ads 0208 7422 5511, info@outthere.co.uk Do not send email listings as attachments: they will be ruthlessly destroyed. All listings information should include a contact phone number, start time and ticket price. Listings cannot be taken over the phone. ☐

UK Radio

National

BBC RADIO 1 97-99 FM

John Peel

Monday-Thursday 30pm-midnight

The more nation's time

Gilles Peterson

Wednesday-Thursday 2pm Post-Rock jazz

Fabio & Grooverio

Friday 2-4am Vangelis drum 'n' bass

Westwood Rap Show

Friday 11pm-2am/Saturday 9pm-midnight

HipHop focus

Reggae Dancehall Nite

Saturday midnight-2am Bass culture

BBC RADIO 3 90-93 FM

Late Junction

Monday-Thursday 10.15-midnight

New Music competition

Jazz Legenos

Friday 4-5pm Active readings

ANOF KERSHAW

Friday 10.30-11.30pm World Music

JAZZ ON 3

Friday 11.30pm-1am

Modern jazz in session and concert.

WORLD ROUTES

Saturday 1-2pm

Lucy Dunn presents a travelogue of global music.

JAZZ FILE

Saturday 6-8.30pm

Documentary magazine

HEAR AND NOW

Saturday 11.50pm-1am New Music magazine

MIXING IT

Sunday 11pm-midnight

HipHop eclectic mix of avant sounds

Regional

BBC LANCASHIRE

95.5/103.9/104.5 FM, 855 MW

ON THE WIRE

Saturday 5-10pm

The Wire's Steve Barker mixes it up worldwide

BBC MERSEYSIDE

95.8 FM, 1485 MW

PMS

Sunday midnight-2am Eclectic mix of avant sounds

BBC SCOTLAND 92.4-94.7 FM

FROM BEBOB TO HIPHOP

Wednesday 7-10pm, Sunday 10pm-1am

Jazz and nu-beats

CABLE RADIO 89.8 FM

(MILTON KEYNES)

THE GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS

Friday 10pm-midnight Eclectic avant mix

KLISS 100 FM (LONDON)

PATRICK FORGE

Sunday 10pm-midnight Eclectic jazz-rock mix

FROST AND HYPE

Sunday/Monday midnight-2am Jungle

4 HERO

Monday 2-4am Jazz, Jangle, cyber-soul, breakfasts

MATT JAM LAHONT

Wednesday 2-4am More breakfast science

LONDON LIVE 94.9 FM

SOLID STEEL

Monday midnight-2am

Mad mixing from the Ninja Tune mob

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supache 61, icarus, freiform, solar x, team
doyobi, people like us, kaffe mathews, there a
mero to be announced, with film and new media
commissions from zil:ero, oblique, addictive tv

16th nov > breconrural, manchester, 20-21 southwark rd
23rd nov > max2001, helix - cello, viola and 2001 ans
25th nov > bryony social, nottingham, 23 southwark rd
6th dec > 6201 east, london, 20-21 southwark rd
13th dec > the thetha, bristol, west bank road

more events to follow > the arts vary, please check in advance
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WITH MARC FELDMAN / OIL GOLDSTEIN
JEMMY VIGNOLD / CLARENCE PENN

MON 19 NOVEMBER
QEII 745PM
KAJIA SAARIAHO
FROM THE GRAMMAR
OF DREAMS
Haunting and resonant, often transfixing and
utterly distinguished. New York Times

Accordianist Richard Galliano is
recognised as the direct heir to Astor
Piazzolla. His music is heart-stoppingly
melodic, evocative of Tango, Jazz,
Swing, French café Waltzes and Cabaret
songs. Fresh, hauntingly atmospheric
and invariably absorbing, tonight he is
reunited with virtuoso clarinetist
Michel Portal and the New York Quintet.

Finnish composer Kaja Saariaho is one
of Europe's most strikingly original musical
voices. From the Grammar of Dreams is
the title of a programme of works which
includes a five-song cycle set to words
by Apollinaire, Holderlin, Sylvia Plath and
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Label lore

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Cadillac (UK), North Country Distributors (UK)
 Details of all Intakt Distributors worldwide:
 www.intakt.ch/distrib -.htm

Run by

Barry Landolt (executive producer); Rosmarie A. Meier, Fred Bochar, Irene Schweizer (co-managers)

Roster includes

Irene Schweizer, Joëlle Léandre, Sylvie Courvoisier, Koch/Schütz/Stader, Barry Guy/LIO, Louis Mohr, Cecil Taylor, Pierre Favre, Stephan Witzel, David Moss, Christian Marclay, Eugene Chadbourne and more

Brief History

Intakt grew out of the milieu of Switzerland's *Taktlos* Festival in the mid-80s, which created an alternative platform to complement the established jazz festivals. The first ever Intakt LP, Irene Schweizer's *Live At Taktlos*, was recorded at the end of February 1984. The catalogue has now grown to 70 titles, including many of Irene Schweizer's solo piano improvisations including historically important records on vinyl on PMP as well as

Schweizer, local musicians such as Hans Koch, Fredy Stader, Martin Schütz, Sylvie Courvoisier, Jacques Demierre, Pierre Favre, Lucas Niggli, Saadet Tüfekçi over the Intakt catalogue, along with the creative experiments of the New York downtown scene – guitarist Elliott Sharp's guitar quartet and duo with turntablist Christian Marclay – and the jazz-based compositions of Barry Guy and his virtuoso London Jazz Composers Orchestra

Statement of intent

At Intakt the musicians and their music are the main focus. In the spirit of *Taktlos*, Intakt presents today's creative music in an area beyond borders, between improvisation, composition, jazz and experimental forms of rock. Such generic concepts no longer help; the borders have become too fluid

Other activities

A subscription service where subscribers receive new releases from Intakt by post and pay 24 Swiss francs per disc. They receive between five and six CDs per year, experiencing musical surprises while they manage their subscription.

Future plans

Releases from Guy/Crispel/Lyden, Co Street/Vibron, Schweizer, Cecil Taylor, Sylvie Courvoisier/José Léandre/Sue Barry, Evan Parker and Barry Guy

Choice cuts

Thurston Moore/William S. Burroughs/Tom Suggs/LR
 The City/None from Nowhere: Barry Guy/LIO
 Ode: Koch/Schütz/Stader/Hans Koch/Christian Marclay
 info & manifests: Patrick Landolt

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Epiphanies

How Paul Smith's London debut at the Roundhouse revealed the visionary force of literate rock 'n' roll to Edwin Pouncey



Received 11 June 2004; accepted 14 July 2004

[illegible]

Much to my delight, I would later discover that Patti Smith had become involved in writing lyrics for the Cult – she was dating BOB keyboard player Allen Lanier at the time – starting with "Career of Evil", co-written with drummer Albert Bouchard, on their 1974 album, *Secret Treasures*. More significantly, she supplied the heady "The Revenge of Vera Gemini" for BOB's charmingly Agents *Of Fortune* disc in 1976 – a same year her Patti Smith Group released their debut album, *Various* – which coincided with her foray into the occult. You may have heard, said, "I'm a serpent, the coiledness of a snake." It was this mystical stanza worthy of Blake that led me to hunt down Smith's poetical works at Camden's Compendium bookshop (sadly now defunct). Here I was pointed towards the shop's beautiful poetry

Allen Ginsberg, authors were well known and vaguely familiar with, but enough to know that they both played a major part in the then unknown Part II Smith story. Equally desirable was the definitive annotated edition of Arthur Rimbaud's collected poems, seeing how the romantic tragic verse of this troubled young 19th century French poet was Smith's first major influence. Reading Rimbaud's tortured, magical prose, Ginsberg's howling rants and Burroughs's hardboiled/hardcore science fantasy in these assorted volumes gave me an insight into how Part II Smith's ideas were assembled in songs of such power, they placed her at the forefront of a new wave of literary rock music, alongside Bob Dylan and Jim Morrison. Except, for once, here was a woman at the controls.

On 16 and 17 May 1976, The Patti Smith Group played the Roundhouse in London's Chalk Farm as part of their European tour to promote *Horses*. Her UK arrival coinciding with the nascent media buzz about punk rock, Patti Smith and her music were inevitably tainted with the same brush. After all, she was sharing the bill with fellow 'punk rockers' The Stranglers, who already looked ancient and sounded out of place. After a long wait, Patti Smith and her gangly group of long-haired musicians walked on stage and launched into a boisterous version of Lou Reed's 'Real Good Time Tonight'. Joyous sounding that it may have been, it still felt like a jarring intrusion. A 1980s compilation of 60s garage rock classics, *Resplendent* in her Lion of Judah T-shirt emblazoned with the slogan 'Love Rastafarian and Live', Smith delivered a set that went beyond simply performing the songs on her debut

[illegible]

The night for living Smith's Roundhouse stand, PSG guitarist Larry Kaye and drummer Jay Dee Daugherty dropped in on The Sex Pistols playing their then regular slot at the 100 Club in Oxford Street. When singer Johnny Rotten spotted them from the stage, he couldn't resist taunting them by denouncing Smith as a tambourine twirling hippy. Then, to a mocking guitar rendition of the "Horses" riff, he began to chant "Horses, Horses, HORSESHIT!" to the delight of his regular, hippy-hating crowd. But this time Rotten had got it wrong. Patti Smith was no more a dumb hippy than she was The Queen of Punk, as the music press had dubbed her. She was an intellectual beatnik poet who stood firm in the belief that nothing could crush great art, be it writing or music. She also knew that her best work was destined to be remembered long after the punk rock fad had been muffled down and passed through the greasy grid of the music industry. When Johnny Rotten spotted her too, while he was scowling at Kaye and Daugherty that night, of course, he was just as strong a rock 'n' roll poet as Smith, as he later went on to prove with "God Save The Queen". The Sex Pistols' anthem to a nation on the skids. Like Blake, Rimbaud, Ginsberg and Smith before him, Rotten discovered his inner self. But back then not just respecting London-Irish punk would allow himself to cosy up to the job description of 'poet'. □

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